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Ely House,
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Ambitions of an apostate

By Christopher Hill

JOHN CAREY:

John Donne
Life, Mind and Art
203pp. Faber. £9.50.
0 571 11636 1

Donne is perhaps the most intellectual of English poets, and John Carey is perhaps the most intelligent of contemporary English literary critics. His encounter, as one might expect, is fierce and enthralling. In *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* Carey rightly starts from Donne's abandonment of the Roman Catholic faith of his fathers. He uses the harsh but correct word "apostasy", and insists on its psychological significance for the poet. Carey suggests three reasons for Donne's apostasy - "he was ambitious, he was an intellectual, and he was reacting, in a not uncommon way, against the love and admiration he had felt as a child for his elders and teachers". He might have added that Donne's action was a triumph for the English government's carefully calculated policy of splitting the Catholics and isolating the Jesuits. Most traditional Catholic families wanted to be left alone, and were pressed to accept the sovereignty of Elizabeth and James I, tacitly ignoring the papal excommunication of Elizabeth. The quarrels which split the Catholic community in the 1590s turned on exactly this issue. Traditional Catholics accepted the position of a non-political, passive group, with no ambitions for a political restoration of the old faith, least of all by foreign arms. It was the Jesuits, underground immigrants who polarized Catholics by insisting on the full Counter-Reformation programme.

Donne was one of those whom government policy was aimed at influencing - a member of a traditional ruling-class family who did not wish to be excluded from political life and the rewards of office by the accident of his faith. Carey points out that Donne's later hostility towards his former co-religionists was directed mainly at the Jesuits. Their insistence on stirring up trouble, on becoming martyrs themselves and involving traditional English Catholics in their fate, was highly distasteful to Donne. His elder brother had probably escaped a traitor's death only by dying in jail. Donne had to decide whether to cooperate with the Jesuit policy or to repudiate it. It was a novel policy which many traditional Catholics resented. Those less ambitious and less centrally placed could perhaps avoid decisions. But Donne lived in London, he was a member of a prominent Catholic family; his mother, descended from the circle of Sir Thomas More, was a pro-Jesuit activist. And Donne was aware of possessing abilities which entitled him to expect a successful political career. Perhaps apostasy was the only way for him to avoid involvement on the pro-Jesuit side. His dilemma was similar to that of nationalists today who disapprove of terrorism in the nationalist cause. Most would prefer a quiet life, neither acclaiming nor condemning terrorism. But when a decision is forced, to decide against terrorism is not necessarily ignoble.

Already as a Catholic Donne the intellectual had reacted against the cult of miracles. *Ignatius His Conclave* reveals a strong dislike of the irrational legends which the Jesuits were peddling. Donne's attack was equalled in ferocity and wit only by Hugh Trevor-Roper. The Catholicism of the Jesuits was not the Catholicism of More the humanist intellectual. Nevertheless, Donne's apostasy meant a complete breach with deeply cherished family traditions. Two of his uncles were Jesuits. It must have had profound psychological effects. In two chapters John Carey analyses "The Art of Apostasy" and "The Art of Ambition". But the whole book is really about the consequences of ambitious apostasy. "In the fantasy world of the poems," Donne "rids himself of his disloyalty by transferring it to women".

One of Carey's most impressively argued points is the continuance of the imagery of the early satires and lyrics in the sermons of Donne. They are "fabrics of the same mind, controlled by similar imaginative needs". This has been noticed before, but Carey suggests that in the poems and in the sermons Donne is dominated by the same psychological needs. His apostasy "may be seen as a necessary condition of some of his greatest love poems, as well as of his 'Holy Sonnets'." In the sermons God and eternity take the place of love and girls, but the urge to

outsoar the mind's boundaries remains the same."

In a chapter called "Bodles" Carey examines at fascinating length Donne's absorption with anatomical structures. Rebutting the charge that "the beauty of the visual world mean nothing to Donne", Carey argues that

the shallowness of mere vision is what his poems struggle to super-vise. Whether he is writing about the human body, or animals, or plants, or inanimate objects, his effort is to engage us on other, and deeper, levels than the visual; to sensitize us, rather than to please our eyes; and to enhance our awareness both of organic life and of the solid, intransigent materials in which it inheres.

Donne is attracted to the "organic mass, volume and articulation" of the human body. "His imagination intrudes into its inner structures. His impulse is towards vivisection." ("Vivisection" is another harsh word which Carey employed earlier to describe the process of hanging, disembowelling and quivering which was "used as a remedy against Catholics". In "Epithalamion" made at Lincoln's Inn, "the priest comes on his knees 'embowed her', linking priestly sacrifice, sex and a traitor's death.")

Donne's interest in the fashionable science of anatomy had been stimulated by his medical education, but his concern is not really medical. He stresses the organic unity of human, animal and vegetable bodies. For all his use of modern technical terms, his approach is close to that of medieval best-love. Lovers' eyes are threaded together on a string, their points are cemented by sweat. "The human body is regularly assimilated to, or blended with, inanimate objects." Donne shows "a medical interest in those parts of the human anatomy . . . where life and sensation have only a dubious and qualified existence." ("A bracelet of bright hair about the bone"). "Intent on establishing the body's inner space, Donne also dwells on the nerves and filaments which hold it together."

This extends to the animal kingdom: the flea exists "in these living walls of jet". "From the viewpoint of a grasp of the organic world," *The Progress of the Soul* "is certainly Donne's masterpiece", Carey claims in a lengthy and

powerful argument about a poem not hitherto a favourite with critics. "Not until Hughes's *Crow* does anything comparable in *The Progress of the Soul* happen in English poetry." "The elephant's mass is held together by strings ('life cords') which, like the 'sinewy thread' of *The Funerall* suggests intricate and fibrous cohesiveness. The body in Donne is both a building and a network, and the contrasting textures these metaphors imply require contrasting but complementary physical responses from us." Donne "does not tell us what a flower looks like ('visual beauty'), but how it feels. He achieves a fusion, merging the human back into the natural world, and raising the natural world towards the mind's light." In *The Progress of the Soul* an "elaborate crowd-scene simile, complete with a personal appearance of Queen Elizabeth, is introduced for the sole purpose of telling us what it's like to be the soil round a root vegetable". Intense concentration on the body as inextricably bound up with the soul led to Donne's early and continuing interest in the theory of naturalism - the doctrine that soul and body are so closely intertwined that they die together, the soul reviving only at the final resurrection.

A chapter on Donne's obsession with change - fashionable among his contemporaries - suggests that it played an important role in unifying his ideas. He was "intrigued by his own 'changeling'". The concept of change "helped to determine the theological issues that would occupy him . . . just as it determined the themes and manner of the *Songs and Sonnets* . . . His insistence, for example, that everyone should get a job relates to his passion for fixedness, which stems directly from his obsession about change, and both relate, in turn, to his own aimlessness and inconsistency, and to his excitement about the idea that God changed nothing into something when he created the world . . . To change yourself into something, by getting a job, is the only fit recompense to God for changing you into something when you were nothing." Donne's contempt and hatred for the "herds of vago-bonds" seeking employment in his England is one of the less attractive traits of the Dean of St Paul's who held two rectories, a vicarage and a prebend in plurality. Courtiers, on the other

hand, in John Carey's paraphrase, "are naturally enhancing God's glory when they cover themselves with expensive textiles."

"Donne was never more paradoxical than in his preoccupation with death. . . He was so repelled by death and its nothingness, that he persistently and ingeniously animates it in his art, and loves to talk in his sermons as if he will be one of the few mortals exempt from dying." On the other hand his paradoxical defence of suicide, whose importance for its author Carey stresses, "was explicitly seen as part of the struggle between authoritarianism and the individual reason which was to convulse the seventeenth century". But Donne also treats Christian martyrdom "as if it were quite evidently just a manifestation of the death-wish . . . Christ himself committed suicide."

Christ interestingly relates this to Durkheim's analysis of types of suicide. Common factors are a lack of integration into society or the family group, a sense of ostracism. "I would faint do something," Donne wrote to his friend Goodier; "but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For in choose, is to die: but to be no part of anything, is to be nothing." Durkheim's analysis is to the point. Donne's animus and type of suicide has no known limit. "limited desire for the infinite." Donne was "a martyr *manque*, and had to live with a set of basic psychic configurations which had been oriented towards death by his education." Hence his preposterously elaborate preparations for his own death.

Contemporary beliefs that the end of the world was at hand enabled Donne sometimes to hope "perchance I shall never die". In any case, an aspect of heaven captivated Donne more than its glory, of which he speaks "in a curiously challenging and proprietary manner." "As soon as my soul enters into heaven, I shall be able to say to the angels . . . and to . . . Christ Jesus himself, 'I am I! the same stuff as you, . . . and therefore let me sit down with you at the right hand of the Father'." "He could tolerate any form of death so long as it allowed him to remain alive."

The age between renaissance and seventeenth-century revolution saw a "crisis of reason". Ultimately scholastic reasoning was replaced by Baconian

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Washington, July, 104 pp., paper £3.40.

THE NICHOLS FILE OF "THE DECEMBERMAN'S MAGAZINE"
edited by James M. Kugel
Published from 1972 until 1977, "The Decemberman's Magazine" (first monthly magazine, in 1973 James Kugel, located and identified the Nichols file, a special set of 193 Soviet volumes and half-volumes from Volynia) through the June number of 1980.
Washington, forthcoming, 304 pp., £30.00.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PUBLISHERS GROUP LTD
1 Gower Street, London WC1

scientific rationality. Donne lived in the intermediate age of scepticism — the age of Montaigne, of Hamlet's "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so", which Donne echoed. Donne had been brought up in the scholastic tradition. He reacted strongly and eloquently against it to stress the impotence of human thought to understand the universe. "New philosophy calls all in doubt." "Renaissance scepticism was a poetic advantage to Donne — because it made all fact infinitely flexible, and so emancipated the imagination. It also forced him to create a new kind of poetry." When Donne rhymed about the limitless extent of human thought, he means what today we should call imagination. As against scientific reasoning, imagination becomes "synonymous with thought, and enables man to conquer the cosmos".

From time to time John Carey associates Donne with Raleigh, on one of whose ships Donne sailed in 1597. He might perhaps have made even more of the comparison. Both men were ambitious, arrogant, self-centred, intellectuals; both were so obtuse in their relations with their fellow human beings that they temporarily blighted their careers by marrying for love at the wrong time; both were unbiassed in denouncing the corruption of the court at which they strove so hard to succeed. Raleigh dabbled in science, yet agreed with Donne that man cannot "give a true reason for the grass under his foot, why it should be green rather than red". Raleigh actually tried to commit suicide, and luckier than Donne — was able to put on a performance at his execution which earned him the reputation of a Protestant martyr.

Carey leads us so sensitively into the unfamiliar ways of thinking of Donne's contemporaries that his one failure sticks out the more. To speak of the God of Calvin as a "monster in the sky", a "sinister arbitrary sadist", is good for a modern laugh, but it can only hinder our response to a creed which exhilarated English writers from Spenser to Bunyan.

Carey's concluding chapter, "Imagined Corners", is superficially the least successful in the book. But that is, I think, because of his refusal to oversimplify, to offer facile syntheses. He has not given us all the answers, but

he has given us a set of tools with which we can do it ourselves. "What, we may start by asking, have angels, money, mandrakes, cains, maps and shadows in common, apart from the fact that they are among Donne's favourite subjects? The answer seems to be that they are meeting places for opposites". "A corner invites divergent lines or planes, but it also intrusively separates them." Theah Donne "liked joining things he also liked the joint to show... What pleased his imagination was not a sense of the world's various contents amiably coexisting, but of oppositional surviving within union, of paired antagonisms locked together."

And that of course is what metaphysical poetry in general is about. George Herbert the courtier turned country parson, celebrating the established church in *The Temple* but recognizing that religion stood on tiptoe for America in despair of the mother country; Marvell praising Charles I's carefully stage-managed death (which drew a bigger crowd than Donne's or even Raleigh's) but accepting Oliver Cromwell as "the force of angry heaven's flame". It has been suggested of Marvell, as Carey suggests of Donne, that "his life and his poetry form a single whole", that his political poems and his lyrics were the same concerns. Yorkshire Puritan minister who longed for suffering as did John Donne but accepted in his erotic religious imagery exactly the aspects of Catholicism which Donne rejected, also demonstrates contradiction locked within unity, as do Vaughan and Traherne contrasting the innocence of childhood with the brutal realities of life in a competitive society. (Carey's comparisons and contrasts between Donne and Traherne, "temperamentally his polar opposite", are especially illuminating.)

John Carey's book will bring no joy to the declining band of those who still believe that the words on the page are so sacred that they should never ask how they got there. He uses a historical and biographical approach to arrive at literary conclusions of which account will have to be taken by the purists. His book is sensitive, searching, powerful, exciting, provocative and witty. It is a superb achievement.

Homage to Julia

By Henry Woudhuysen

CLIFFORD ENDRES

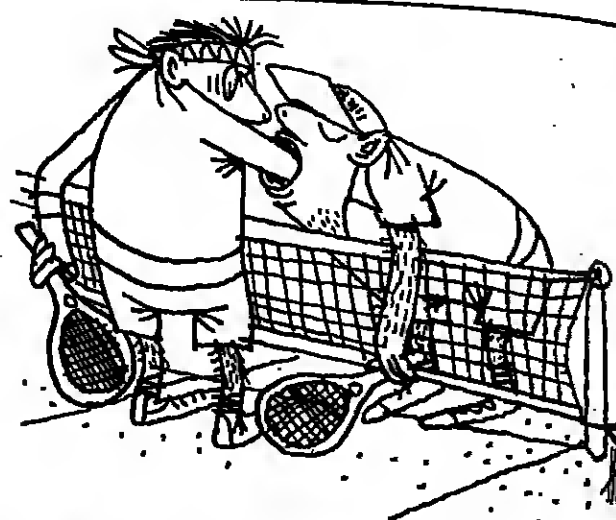
Journalist Secundus
The Latin Love Elegy in the Renaissance
23900. Hamden, Connecticut Archon Books, £25.
0 208 01832 8

Joh. Everaerts, better known as Joannes Secundus — probably because an elder brother with the same Christian name died before he was born in 1511 — has been claimed as the only writer of genuine products by the revival of interest in Latin verse during the Renaissance. Certainly he is one of the most attractive writers of his kind of literature and his life and works are at times reminiscent of those of Keats. Like Keats he died before he was thirty, and his best poems have a powerful sensuousness and a fascination with art. Secundus was himself a sculptor and modelist. His most famous and influential poems were the *Basia*, so admired by Ronsard and Othelet, and often translated into English; most memorably by Thomas Stanley. They appeared deeply to the Platonic ideal. Cavalier poets and, with the beautiful *Epithalamium* have tended to obscure the rest of Secundus's work. The chief virtue of Clifford Endres's book is to focus attention on one part of it, the lesser-known *Elegies*.

Book One of these is addressed to Julia. It was probably written when the poet was in his very early twenties at Malines (and Bourges), where he studied under the great lawyer and emblemist Adriaen, and is a remarkable performance, by any standards. It borrows much from the classical elegists, especially as Dr. Endres points

out, from Tibullus, and can successfully imitate Petrarch. But he makes all of this his own, transmuting his sources into "Alexandrian poetry of a unique tone and achievement, a merging of spontaneity and artifice, of naturalness and conscious art". Three Commemorative Elegies written in succeeding years celebrate his first meeting with Julia and herald the spring. But in Book Two he has abandoned his now-married former mistress for Lydia, Venetian and Neaera and the results are less satisfactory, lacking the unity of the earlier poems. The third book is almost entirely given over to occasional verse, and panegyric, including a fine description and meditation on the statues and tombs of Charles VIII, Louis XII and the woman who married both of them; Anno do Brage, in the Cathedral of St Denis, in Paris; Secundus responded strongly to concrete art, but also to the criticism of love. Elegy 1.10, in which he dreams he has Julia in bed with him, is particularly effective, while the opening of the second Commemorative Elegy is invitingly lucid.

Endres offers texts and translations of these three anniversary poems as well as of seventeen Elegies, most of them taken from Book One. Sketching in what little is known of their author's life, his literary antecedents and background, he provides a short but to the point commentary on each poem. Most of all, Endres would like to associate the poet with the humanist culture of the Renaissance, and his father's friend, although he also compares him to Boccaccio. His versions of the poems, in English, are literal, despite being rather chopped about in places. They are not very elegant or attractive, but they will help the reader with little Latin to get nearer to that rich Burgundian humanist culture of which Secundus and his father's friend Erasmus were such a notable and influential part.



The inner game. This drawing is one of the many examples of grotesque humour to be found in Ernst Hührlimann's Na, se was... (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 3 423 01636 6).

The princely progress

By Anthony Burgess

CLIVE JAMES
Charles Charnock's Challenges On the Pathway to the Throne
A Royal Poem in Rhyming Couplets with Illustrations by Marc
104pp. Cape, £4.95.
0 224 01954 6

To nobly Charles, yet unennobled James
Presents this specimen of Higher Games,
Assured, though, of at least an O.B.E.
Sooner or later, for well, let's just see—
Skill in the dour destructive wilderness?

His services to television criticism? Besides, as is well known, our Royal Family Loves digressing, let's say, however hammy. Delivered. And again (let it be muttered) The colonialist bred must be well buttered. Though unrelated to the Sage of Rye, And Lion of Lamb House, James trains ooe oya Upon the intolerable pinnacles of Style, Terse verso, not poetical mandarin, the while He steeps the other in the pool of crystal. He woosly shatters with his fist or pistol. Nor is this Clive of India. He halls From Empire's shoddy jewel, New South Wales, Whore penial memories still rawly rankle: Observe the chain-mark round the leese-socked ankle. Though Cambridge-sleeked and London-tamed, at times He plonks an Aussie phoneme in his rhymes, Like marriedly dithered on Page 96 Of this new Hudibras to instant mix No mere fastidious than it really is.

His opus subject is the Prince of Cymru. And all the flaming film and flummery That have oppressed our futurologist's career. From whom he first cocked his cup-handle ear (The image is from Mar on the dust-jacket) In wonder at the loyal London racket. Which warmed the Arle day that distant June. Whereon our second (Vivint) mortal moon Became state welfare's onomastic basilion And head of two ecclesiae — Erasmus And Presbyterian (both, in fact, Polagan). Through schools subservient to the harsh contagion Of SS training camps, commando courses, Through mastery of ships, tanks, aircraft, horses (Though there his sister Anne carried the banner). The time descending condescending manner. Indeed the whole damned thing *Encyclopaedia Monarchica*, to bludgeon from the media — Striles of a playboy, moral of a monk: One cherry bratly madd the whole press drunk. Now *neia bane*, James's spleen is shown. To the dirt-throats, never to the Throne. Approving of the monarchy, *James's temper Eadem*, out of temper with the tamper Of Irish wops and polacks in Australia. Who think the crown an old hat and a fathro, And can't equate corruption with republics. Demos, thinks James (here is his poem's outh), looks The dictatorial arise when kings and queens Don't give demotivels and tongues the means To kiss blue voles in dreams or waking, cry: "O kiss me this, James is right, and so am I. Funny enough, his book: You'll meet them all: Lady Jane Wolcott; Lord Butterball; Lord Nilton and David Heller Gaudome; Bathor Hopantz (who's she when she's at home?); Mark Pillocks, Shirley Whirly, Lord Lambchop; A. J. P. Tallpin, the whole butcher's shop. And Lady Diana Seethrough-Spiffing, belle Of the ball, noised Pom sheila, a sho, as well. A nice poetic tribute to the Prince.

Latic to make Capol's libel lawyers wince. And there's another ribbidity to come — The Laureate's epithalamium. Though, since John Betja is a thrifty man. Homayntread the one for Prince's Anoe — Now, white Ulyss London? "No, not that. Charles is no flaming lily, and that's flat. A lily, the dinkum digger makes (dole) So up with satonens, down with the pig's ear. Rejoice with James and for Prince Charles a cheer.

STEPHEN THERNSTROM (Editor):
Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups
2101 pp. Harvard University Press.
\$30.
0 674 37512 2

Thirty years ago, in the introduction to his celebrated book *The Uprooted*, Oscar Handlin remarked (in the tone of someone throwing down a gauntlet): "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history..." His message launched a generation of sociologists and historians on voyages of exploration. The present volume may be seen as their homecoming, laden with treasure. Stephen Thornstrom is a former pupil of Professor Handlin, himself a partner in the editorial team: the partner to whom, probably, every contributor owes some intellectual debt, large or small.

This encyclopedia, in fact, is the crown of Handlin's life's work, and the vindication of his school. It is a comprehensive and exhaustive work of ripe scholarship, excellently written, handsomely produced. Although I hope to show that its value transcends its usefulness to teachers and students of United States studies, I must also report that they will find it indispensable, whether as a stimulus, a guide, or simply as a source of otherwise inaccessible pieces of information (a good many of the useful bibliographies which complete each entry start with some sentence as "There is no literature dealing specifically with Georgians, Hispanics in the United States"). It compares more than favourably in size and organization with various other works of reference on American history and society (there has been a small epidemic of them recently) and is entirely worthy of the great university whose name it bears. It is almost clean of misprints. Its English price is the rough equivalent of its American one: the extortions of the American publisher are clearly marked-up which some firms put on books from the other side of the Atlantic has been foregone. The warmest thanks and congratulations are in order.

It will be noted from the title that the subject is no longer simply the immigrants with whom *The Uprooted* was concerned. This in part reflects the obvious fact that the foreign-born now constitute only a tiny proportion of such groups as the Irish, the Jews and the Germans in America. More profoundly, the change reflects a change in perception. Over the past decade or so, the next term "ethnicity" has become something of a taboo-word, for scholars have come to see it as the master-concept which can give intelligibility to the whole vast field of current social problems. Indeed the whole damned thing *Encyclopaedia Monarchica*, to bludgeon from the media — Striles of a playboy, moral of a monk: One cherry bratly madd the whole press drunk. Now *neia bane*, James's spleen is shown. To the dirt-throats, never to the Throne. Approving of the monarchy, *James's temper Eadem*, out of temper with the tamper Of Irish wops and polacks in Australia. Who think the crown an old hat and a fathro, And can't equate corruption with republics. Demos, thinks James (here is his poem's outh), looks The dictatorial arise when kings and queens Don't give demotivels and tongues the means To kiss blue voles in dreams or waking, cry: "O kiss me this, James is right, and so am I. Funny enough, his book: You'll meet them all: Lady Jane Wolcott; Lord Butterball; Lord Nilton and David Heller Gaudome; Bathor Hopantz (who's she when she's at home?); Mark Pillocks, Shirley Whirly, Lord Lambchop; A. J. P. Tallpin, the whole butcher's shop. And Lady Diana Seethrough-Spiffing, belle Of the ball, noised Pom sheila, a sho, as well. A nice poetic tribute to the Prince.

Inventorying the immigrants

By Hugh Brogan

The words *encyclopedia* and *dictionary* seem nowadays to be almost interchangeable, at least in the minds of publishers. Someone opening the *Harvard Encyclopedia* might reasonably be surprised not to find page after page of brief entries setting out the bare facts of as many of the multi-farious institutions, individuals, topics, peoples and places connected with the general subject of American ethnic groups as could be crammed into more than a thousand double-columned pages of small type. I myself was at first a little disconcerted to find no entry on the Catholic Church, Ellis Island or the US Census (but there is a long appendix on "Methods of Estimating the Size of Groups"). I was more than disconcerted to find no entry on the United States or the American people: I feared that the editors might be trying to explain the methods of the planets without reference to the sun. But it soon became clear that they knew what they were about. Their 155 entries divide into three categories. Least important are the brief definitions of such terms as Anglo-Saxon and Mother Tongue; dictionary items. Perhaps there are rather too few of these (twelve by my count): presumably the number was kept to a minimum to save space and ensure coherence, but given the number of times that such terms are used in the "sojourner" and "redemptorist" turn up and have a false economy. Or perhaps it was feared that added definitions would make the compilation too much a dictionary; for all the other entries are truly encyclopedic, each being an essay, long or short as its subject requires, with all the sense of purpose that, since Diderot's time, an encyclopedia must possess to be worthy of the name. The largest number of these other entries are devoted to the ethnic groups themselves, all but one of which (the American people, as already noted) get an article apiece. The diversity of the US population, as it is thus revealed, will astound all but the best informed; or perhaps I am the only person who didn't know that there is a group of Azerbaijanis in the United States (mostly former German prisoners of war who escaped westward in 1945), and another of Zoroastrians (Zubin Mehta is one of them).

The third group of entries consists of twenty-eight thematic essays: the core of the encyclopedia. Not only do these essays, each by a distinguished scholar, draw together the information assembled in the group entries and show its significance, but by the different angle of approach which each theme imposes they constantly throw fresh and unexpected light on the whole field. For instance, the three essays on "American Identity" (by Philip Gleason, on "Assimilation and Pluralism", by Harold J. Abramson, and on "Concepts of Ethnicity" by William F. Starna) all cover much of the same ground; they cite much of the same evidence, and their conclusions strongly reinforce each other; but the differences between their approaches make a real effort to see how they relate to each other. The effort is well worth while, indeed is part of the reward: our brains profit from expert reward. The term *ethnicos* and the derivatives are stretched pretty widely (but not, Professor Peterson shows in his article on concepts of ethnicity beyond reason): we are told about Indian tribes, religious groups, groups dying or dead, groups that are still in the womb, or scarcely conceived. The result is an amazingly full and accurate picture of the American people today, and one, I am prepared to say, that anything is omitted in the pages that I have not had time to read there may, for all I know, be a discussion of environmental politics or the desirability of a balanced budget; but even if something is left out, the dominant impression is that any reader will retain will be of comprehensive usefulness. Sometimes its immediate usefulness is quite startling: proof, turn to the later pages of the article on the Jews and read the discussion of attitudes to Israel.

Tocqueville's useful term for this earliest of ethnic or immigrant groups, "the Anglo-Americans", has not found favour (there is a brief entry on "Anglo-American", but it is only concerned with contemporary usage); but otherwise the subject receives more than ample justice. Thus, the article on the English was written by Charles E. Erickson, of the London School of Economics. Professor Erickson is the world's leading authority on nineteenth-century English emigrants to the United States, and he rightly devotes most of her space to that important topic. In view of the thematic essays she might have gone even further, and omitted all mention of the colonial period; but as is the case with a brief sketch which at least sets her "invisible immigrants" against a visible background.

The other main feature of the encyclopedia is the set of eighty-seven maps. They are beautifully drawn, but are nevertheless, alas, the book's one certain failure. So far as I can judge, they are substantially accurate, except for the one on England, which puts Birmingham in Worcestershire, invents a county called Lancashire, and does not include Middlesbrough at all. Not enough work seems to have been done to relate the maps in the texts of the articles which they are supposed to illustrate. For instance, since Patrice Higonnet found it necessary to refer to La Rochelle, Poitou and Saintonge in his article on the French, these places should have been marked on the accompanying map of France, absurdly small though it is.

But this sort of blemish is less important than the general lack of cartographical imagination. It seems bizarre, to see the least of it, that the early maps of the United States are those showing respectively the pre-Columbian and the present-day distribution of the Indian tribes. Their extreme usefulness should have sug-

gested parallel ideas to the editors, for example a map of Africa showing the incursion of the principal population groups in that continent in, say, 1650, just as the importance of Africa into the English colonies got seriously under way. The maps in Reger Anstey's *African Slave Trade* would have made a good model. Instead we get a map showing the names and frontiers of the post-colonial states, the sort of map to be found in any school atlas. Malidwyn Jones's charmingly urbane article on the Scotch-Irish explains the dispersion of that group across America with the utmost attainable lucidity, but still a map would have helped, especially as it cannot be assumed that every user of the encyclopedia will know exactly where (for instance) the Cumberland Valley is, or even how it differs from the Cumberland Gap. And instead of that unfortunate map of Old England it would have been amusing, and possibly valuable, to include one of Lincolnshire, East Anglia and Essex, and of the West Country too, showing all the place names (Aulsebrook, Boston, Dedham, Exeter, Fulmham, Grinn, ...) which were in the scattered ever New England. There could have been a map of their distribution in that region too. Together they would have made the point, which recurs in the group entries again and again, that however sharp and deeply felt were divisions between men from different villages and regions in Ireland, country (whether England, Ireland, Calcutta or Germany), in America these local distinctions were ignored by the natives and gradually abandoned by the immigrants as they came to be identified, and to identify themselves, as simply English, Irish, Italian and so on, before becoming plain or hyphenated Americans. Finally, a map, or series of maps, showing the ethnic neighbourhoods of New York, would have been an

enormous help to those who do not have the geography of lower Manhattan at their fingertips; much more use than the dozen or so overlapping maps of central and eastern Europe which illustrate the articles on the Germans, the Austrians, the Jews, the Belorussians, and so on (and on the map of Poland, by the way, the names of the provinces, printed in grey ink, can barely be read against the shading which shows the Polish-speaking areas in 1910).

Maps, though desirable, are not essential: an authoritative text is. This the editors have unquestionably given us. Their encyclopedia will dominate the field for the foreseeable future, especially if the money can be found to keep it up-to-date. Properly used, it might even change the way Americans look at themselves. "What then is the American, this new man?" asked Crèvecoeur two hundred years ago, in a passage which Professor Thornstrom's contributors delight to quote, and to disagree with. For he predicted the melting of individual Europeans into a new race of men, much as the English Jew, Isaac Zangwill, did in his celebrated play *The Melting Pot*. The encyclopedia shows that, whatever many have imagined to the immigrants (it was an extremely complex process), they have not yet melted into a homogeneous mass, and show no sign of doing so. Some new metaphor will have to be found.

It must not be imagined that the interest of this book is only for Americans and those concerned with that society. The concept of ethnicity, and of the dynamic processes which create and destroy ethnic groups, is of over-wide relevance, as, in spite of the best efforts of governments, more and more diverse immigrants (the United States alone has received eleven million immigrants in the past thirty

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"Americanness" of American literature, tracking it to its psychological, sociological, and historical origins and following it as it evolved into distinctly national literary genres, especially the romance. The fine books of Richard Chase and Joel Porte, R. W. B. Lewis and Leslie Fiedler, Daniel Hoffman and Roy Harvey Pearce, taking issue with one another as they seemed to do from year to year, now coalesce into a canon of complementary works, notable, among other things, for how extraordinarily readable they are. It is in this tradition that Michael Bell's work is offered, and although in its freshness the challenge it presents to the others seems prominent, it, too, is ultimately complementary, and of a high quality.

Bell begins with the shrewdly conservative aim of pursuing this matter of the distinctiveness of the American romance by asking a question that the objective record should be able to answer. When an author said, as Irving, Hawthorne, or Melville, among others, did say, that he was writing a romance, what did he mean by it? In his first reach, Bell does not attempt to answer the question by inferring from the romances written what the authors "must have" meant. Rather, he examines the aesthetic theories read by the authors, their own explicit remarks, and the comments they elicited from their contemporaries. His early chapters illustrate that romance was early seen as an indulgence of the imagination detached from the understanding and thus, in common-sense terms, dangerously anti-social, so that the decision to become a romance writer was, on one hand, a calculated step out of society if not a gesture of defiance of it. On the other hand, the romance, and of these Hawthorne is the most notable, instead of accepting the subjective nature of the "romantic" or "poetic," attributed these qualities to reality rather than their own imaginations and so attempted to attach fiction to fact.

From his thoroughly convincing base, Bell moves out into two increasingly larger and more problematic areas. Taking his cue from James, who furnishes the phrase of the book's subtitle, he says that, Hawthorne's conservative historicization of romance notwithstanding, romance did mean a sacrifice of relation between imagination and actuality. This leads him to a consideration of his subjects (Charles Brockden Brown and Poe in addition to those already mentioned) as conscious deviants from their culture.

Finally, Bell's argument leads him to the widest sphere: the American romance as an exploration of America. In his own words, he examines the ways in which Hawthorne and Melville "consciously exploited the dilemma of the romance to understand what they saw as an analogous dilemma facing the national experiment."

It is hardly surprising that the farther Bell reaches the more debatable his generalizations become. To be sure, the romancers were alienated in the gross sense of their attempting to earn a living by an activity very unlike the pursuits of their commercial countrymen. But his model of alienation is too remote and implies that although his subjects were different from one another, the society from which each was alienated was a constant. I more than suspect that if a Philadelphia lawyer, a vagabond Southern orphan, and a smug New York importer all decided to be "alienated," each separated himself from a different thing than did the others.

Moreover, it is far from certain that the biographical evidence must be read in support of this theory of conscious deviance. Hawthorne, for example, a penniless young father yet to produce his first novel, nevertheless found himself morally encouraged and financially supported by his friends from the solid, unimaginative, workaday world; they seemed terribly proud of him. And the notorious doubts Melville's family had about his romancing seemed to have stemmed from his later inability to sell his books rather than from his moral decision to write them.

But to take issue with Bell on such matters is to make too much of the path he chooses to follow and too little of what that path enables him to note. His particular observations on one or another work of literature are both level-headed and convincing. I know no better reader of Hawthorne, for example. He clearly and valuably separates the allegorical inclinations of the characters from their creator's illustrative use of them rather than of allegory itself. "Hawthorne's emblems," he shows, "generally illustrate not his ideas but those of his characters," and he is right. Bell's astute reading of such wedding pieces as "Young Goodman Brown" prompts one to reflect that, after all, the great fuss over the symbolic meaning of the scarlet letter is a fuss made by the characters in the novel. Why treat Hawthorne as if he were another such allegorist as Heatter or her townspeople? When asked what the A in Little Pearl says is the letter A found in her hornbook. She is too young to think differently and Hawthorne is too wise to do so. He is the masterful historian of the human insistence on "allegorizing" experience into rigid "iron" forms, cut off from life and suppressive of it.

The separation of Hawthorne from viewpoints he dramatizes is only one of the further rewards Bell offers after the gift of his fine introductory explanation of what it meant to the romancers to be romancers. There is no question that *The Development of American Romance* deserves every centimeter of the space it will occupy on the shelves of standard works on the evolution of an American literature; it will influence many students, and it should.

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"Le Discours du Prêtre," a watercolor by Jean Louis Forain included in a sole of "Impressionist and Modern Watercolours and Drawings" to be held at Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 on Tuesday, June 30. Also included in the sole are a number of works by Munch, Signac, Picasso, Klee, Vuillard, and Utrillo.

Tricks of the trade

By E. S. Turner

HOUDINI:
Miracle Mangers and Their Methods
240pp. New York: Prometheus Books.
\$13.95.
0 87975 143 6.

For a man who thrived on mystifying the public, Harry Houdini took an odd delight in exposing the secrets of his fellow performers. He even devoted a book to unmasking the famous French illusionist, Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin, in admiration of whom, many years earlier, he had called himself Houdini (he was born Ehrlich Weiss, in Budapest). His excuse must be that it was a contentious and self-advancing trade. More to his credit were his attacks on those who cheated the bereaved at séances.

Miracle Mangers and Their Methods was first published in 1920. Although the jacket shows the author against a background of "spirits" presences, he is little concerned here with bogus mediums. He

concentrates on fire-resisters, sword-swallowers, poison-drinkers and the like over whom "oblivion threatens to stretch their darkening wings".

It is chiefly as a reminder of peculiar feats once accepted as entertainment — not least by "the crowned heads of Europe" — that this ragbag of a book is worth reading. As a vaunted work of exposure it is disappointing. Even the loyal James Randi ("the Amazing Randi") says in a foreword: "There is a certain amount of naïveté apparent in the text as if Houdini was not completely confident that some of the methods he describes would readily work." Formulae like those for desensitizing the tongue against the pain of red-hot metal are derived, as Randi says, from charlatans "who would not have risked their own prescriptions for any reward".

The book was compiled from a mass of cuttings and old books about wonder-workers. When Houdini wrote, works like Chambers' *Book of Days* had already given away numerous tricks, including the art of drinking molten lead. The author quotes a fire-eater called Barnello who explains that the end of a poker should be well weakened by bending before it is made red-hot, so that it can be bitten off easily; and Houdini adds, presumably echoing Barnello, "No performer should attempt to bite off red-hot iron unless he has a good set of teeth." Among Houdini's own maxims is: "Never inhale breath while performing with fire. *Flame drawn into the lungs is fatal to life.*"

Fire-eaters will probably always be with us (for some reason, they frequent Strasbourg). The old-time adept, like the one watched by John Evelyn at Lady Sutherland's house, would put a live coal on the tongue, set it with a raw oyster, and blow on the coal with bellows until it sparked and flamed.

Conceivably, in far-away places, performers like "the incombustible Spaniard" and "the Russian salamander" are not yet extinct. Their specialty, sitting on a hot stove, enjoyed something of a vogue early in the last century. A woman performer, to show there was no deception, introduced live animals into the chamber where they died of convulsions. Chambers, the most distinguished heat-resister, took a leg of mutton with him, lit the oven and waited till it was cooked (patrons of the new-fangled Turkish baths were later to perform similar feats with eggs). To waste away the time in his

hot seat Chabert quaffed phosphorus and arsenic, going one better than rivals who merely gargled with sulphuric acid. Anxious not to be found wanting, Houdini copies out pages of antidotes to poisons from medical dictionaries.

Sword-swallowers, whose "profession" the author rather admires, are certainly not extinct. There is a picture of a young Edwardian lady, with a whole cluster of bills protruding from her mouth. Few will need to be told that blades for swallowing are decidedly thinner than cavalry sabres. It is all a question of overcoming the initial nausea, says Houdini, who does not appear to have nourished any appetite for cold steel; but he says "practice will soon accustom any throat to the passage of the blade".

Sometimes he seems more eager to encourage emulation than to expose, though he would not have us copy the lithophagous who swallow stones, hot or cold, in such amount. We they clink together in the belly, are told that this art is dangerous not because people think it dangerous, but because the following details are honestly claimed: that they are nourished on stones alone. Houdini is also against the water-spouter who, having tanked up beforehand, ejects copious streams of liquid, including "claret". He has seen only one performer who could gulp the frogs with any dignity and he is no time for snake-awallower. In passing, he mentions how the famous Billington told him he hardened himself to the demands of his office by killing rats with his teeth.

The illustrations to the book ought to be a rare feast, but they are reproductions and sometimes it is hard to distinguish what feats of daring are being portrayed.

Some poignancy attaches to the account of men with mildreds strong enough to support anvils, on which hammer blows are struck (apparently "sustaining the anvil is the whole matter, and the blows are felt"). Blographers tell us that in 1926 Houdini, in a dressing-room of an American theatre, assured student visitors he could well withstand powerful batterings in the stomach region. One of the students, rained sudden heavy blows on him as he relaxed on a couch and the result was a ruptured appendix, followed by death. "No performer should allow a stranger to hit him in the stomach until he has placed his muscles," would have made a useful footnote to the book.

SEWERYN BIALER:
Stalin's Successors
Leadership, Stability, and Change in the Soviet Union
311pp. Cambridge University Press.
\$12.50.
0 521 23518 9

SEWERYN BIALER (Editor):
The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy
411p. Croom Helm. £14.95.
0 7099 0623 4

General studies of Soviet politics have become rare and those dealing with Russia's future even rarer; for this reason alone Seweryn Bialer should be congratulated for tackling a topic which is of necessity both speculative and risky. Bialer was active in the Polish Communist party before he went to America and became a Professor of Government at Columbia University. In the present context, his experience has no doubt been an advantage: the writer has learnt from the official of the party Central Committee when it comes to discussing the question of succession in Eastern Europe. Bialer should be less likely to go astray than his colleagues who may specialize in "decision-making", but who in private life have few decisions to take other than putting a mark on their students' term papers.

As the author of a valuable earlier study on Stalin and his generals, he is as familiar as anyone can be with recent Soviet history and has, furthermore, read widely in the social sciences. In fact, he is sometimes a little over-enthusiastic by academic theory on such matters as elites, legitimacy, modernization and so on. On occasions he invokes the authority of colleagues and provides references only to come up with statements such as: "One characteristic of the last, mature stage of Stalinism provides the focal point for understanding the phenomenon of Stalinism as a whole. It is a personal dictatorship." or "We do not know how much longer Brezhnev will remain in office. We do expect, however, that as long as he does remain his personnel policy will remain basically intact." or "No easy choices are available to any set of Soviet leaders in the 1980s." True and quite a few other similar statements are perfectly true, but so obvious as to be scarcely worth making.

Stalin's Successors contains a wealth of material on topics such as elite turnover, career experience and the age of party secretaries, but Bialer's own conclusions are not readily apparent; like certain pilgrims, he seems to be under an injunction to take two steps back for every three that he has advanced. Time and again the impression is created that a daring and controversial statement is about to be delivered, and sometimes it is indeed made, only to be modified immediately and hedged about with many qualifications. To give just one example: Bialer states towards the end of his book that while, in the 1970s, the Soviet system displayed a high level of stability and continuity, this may be seriously shaken in the coming decade, only to retreat in the very next sentence, where he writes that the changes which may take place will not constitute a crisis of the system nor lead to a transformation of the Soviet government. In the sentence after that he retreats yet further: "of course I am not in all certain that major changes will take place. What I do project is a significant increase in pressure for change." In short, little of his original prediction remains.

Elsewhere, Bialer devotes considerable space to the question of generational change, trying to provide a "profile" of the potential new Soviet leaders and to identify the characteristics that differentiate them from those whom they will replace. After some brave attempts of this kind, however, everything becomes blurred: it is not clear whether change will take place suddenly or gradually or whether perhaps it has already taken place. Eventually the author concludes that "we do not suspect that the new generation is politically homogeneous." Nor does he suspect that it will be any easier for the new leaders to deal with the international

arena; the new leadership may well be more liable to take risks than the present one. The only certainty then is that the new generation will be different from the old, and on second thoughts Bialer is not absolutely sure even about this: the new generation only "seems" to be different, it "might be different as a group".

It is perfectly normal for those writing about future contingencies to hedge their bets, yet Bialer's caution seems excessive. Sections of *Stalin's Successors* read either as if they were written by a committee, with the rapporteur trying to accommodate conflicting viewpoints, or as if the author, as he wrote, realized that current events somehow did not bear out his original assumptions. On the very first page there is a curious footnote which possibly provides the clue: according to Bialer, some observers contend that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan represents nothing new in Soviet behaviour, but merely that Western perceptions of Soviet policies have been changed by it, especially among those who did not expect such a move. "In my opinion, the invasion of Afghanistan signifies a major change not only in Western perceptions of Soviet policies, but also in Soviet perceptions and behaviour," Bialer writes. He may or may not be right (I think he is quite wrong); what really matters is the fact that the invasion surprised him and thus compelled him to re-examine some of his basic ideas on the subject.

Despite Bialer's caution, certain ideas and viewpoints clearly emerge from his book. He regards himself as a moderate, or "centrist" (to use the old left-wing parlance), who sympathizes neither with the views of George Kennan (who "avoids coming to grips with hard problems by soaring over them") nor with extreme opponents of Kennan such as Richard Pipes and Leo Labedz ("whose view of the Soviet Union from a set mould compels Bialer now to dissociate himself from those of his colleagues who believe in the 'institutional pluralism' of the Soviet system and who have proposed that the Brezhnev era would be best understood if one attributed to him the sort of motives we attribute to most politicians in the West. But Bialer dissociates himself reluctantly, his heart still seems to be with the pluralists and certainly not with those who hold the 'frozen view'").

To those unfamiliar with the internal debates among Sovietologists, these disputes may appear about as topical, as relevant and as intelligible as, say, a quarrel between remonstrants and anti-remonstrants in seventeenth-century Church history. In outline, they are of importance, even though historians are a few hundred years hence may take a different view. The debate is not between "lightning enemies" and "lethargic sympathizers" of the Soviet Union, as many commentators tend to define it; Kennan, for one, is anything but a man of the left. It is a legitimate discussion between observers of the Soviet scene who believe that, broadly speaking, the Soviet system has changed since Stalin, but not all that much, and that détente, while not a complete fraud has been largely a unilateral affair. Kennan, on the other hand, takes a more sanguine view of détente and of Soviet foreign political intentions in general. Bialer's "middle position" is not above suspicion because he pays far more homage to the advocates of détente at almost any price than to its critics. He writes, for instance, that the late Isaac Deutscher's expectations of major changes in post-Stalinist Russia were "closer to the mark" than those of most other observers. Deutscher wrote soon after Stalin's death of "the coming epoch which may bring with it a breath-taking reversal of the process by which the Soviet democracy of the early days of the revolution was transformed into an autocracy." If Bialer believes that even during the past three decades there have indeed borne out these predictions, he is a man of exceedingly modest expectations.

All things considered, it may still be true that he is a "centrist", only the

Mist over Moscow

By Walter Laqueur

location of the centre has shifted during the past two or three years not because of any startling turn taken by the debate between the détenteists and the anti-détenteists, but because of the actions of the Russians. This shift appears quite clearly in some of the contributions to the interesting volume of essays, *The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy*, which Professor Bialer has edited. Most of these were apparently written in the transition period between "late détente" and the invasion of Afghanistan. American Sovietologists, needless to say, do not form a monolithic party, but it is fair to say that during most of the 1970s it was fashionable in many circles here to maintain that the Soviet Union was undergoing a gradual, albeit slow process of liberation, that Eurocommunism was a movement of the utmost political significance, that more often than not Soviet policy was showing restraint in foreign affairs, that there had been no substantial changes in the global correlation of power, that on the contrary Russia had sustained a long series of setbacks — and that any one sceptical of these obvious propositions was at best an eccentric, or more likely a diehard Conservative, "continuing to operate with mental images carried over from Munich and Pearl Harbor to Yalta and Vietnam" (A. Dulles).

These views were more fashionable among political scientists than historians, and had less to do with the realities of international affairs than with the general post-Vietnam mood

on the American domestic scene in general, and on the university campuses in particular. But then the mood changed again and this is reflected in Bialer's symposium. Thus Adomait (unlike Professor Dallin) believes that overall Soviet foreign and military policies have been remarkably successful. J. Azrael does not share the optimism previously voiced on many occasions about centrifugal pressures leading to a fully-fledged political crisis in the Soviet Union; Connor expects the next Politburo to look more or less like the present one, and Korbonaki sees no signs of significant democratization in Eastern Europe. Lastly, we have Bialer himself concluding that the Soviet Union is obviously not a "sated power".

The two volumes together raise questions about the general level of Soviet studies in the United States — and the same questions apply of course to other Western countries. These are not bad books; indeed, it would be difficult to think of better ones published in recent years. The essays on economic topics, for example, are excellent, even if they suffer from what seems to be a longer than average interval between writing and publication. The merits of the other essays, however, are less obvious: the impact of academic political science on Sovietology seems to have been a mixed blessing. Three decades ago there were only a handful of Sovietologists in the United States but their contribution to our understanding of the Soviet Union was very consider-

able. Can the same truthfully be said about today's practitioners? Admittedly, it was easier to write pioneering works in 1950 than it is today, but this is surely not the whole explanation. It is doubtful whether the late Noum Jassy, or Boris Nikolaevskii, or Solomon Schwartz would have been able to write a paragraph such as the following (to quote from *Stalin's Successors*):

To suggest that a core set of beliefs, norms and values is shared within and among the Soviet elites is not to imply that they are shared by each organizational or functional elite segment to the same extent, with the same intensity. As a matter of fact, the whole notion of institutions and institutionalizations assumes the process of selection and correlation with power of diverse primary values in different functional and organizational segments of the elites.

In every field of study there is a tendency to magnify existing differences of opinion, and Sovietology is no exception. Most people working in the field will quite likely agree with most of Bialer's propositions, largely no doubt because of his great caution in advancing them. But there remains the question what the recent literature on the subject including these books has added to our understanding of things Soviet beyond the fact that Brezhnev and his colleagues are no longer in their first youth and that their successors will face certain problems and will have to make certain decisions.

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commentary

Sectional interests

By T. J. Binyon

The First Deadly Sin
Ritz Cinema, Leicester Square

Brian Hutton's film opens with some savage cross-cutting between scenes in a hospital operating theatre and on a New York street at night. A surgeon's scalpel carves a patient open in close-up; on the street a homicidal maniac heats his victim to death with an ice-axe. A crucifix on the wall of the operating theatre echoes a neon cross outside a Baptist chapel in the street. In other words, we are in for blood, but also significance.

The patient on the table, having an infected kidney removed, is Barbara Delaney (Faye Dunaway), wife of Sergeant Edward X. Delaney (Frank Sinatra) who is just coming up for his pension. Assigned to the murder, Delaney begins to suspect that it is one of a series, but his precinct captain (Anthony Zerbe), obsessed with running a tight ship, doesn't want to know. So Delaney puts together a scratch team, consisting of a cynical police surgeon - well played by James Whitmore - a retired museum curator (Martin Gabel) and the widow of one of the victims (Brenda Vaccaro). With the customary serendipity of amateurs, they come up with the murderer: Daniel Blank (David Dukes), a young WASP executive, who really is nuttier than several fruit cakes.

Since the law seems slow to exact vengeance, Delaney sets it aside. He blows Blank away with a Luger, hands in his papers, and sits by his wife's hospital bed, reading to her *Honey Bunch*. Her first days in *Cinn* (a children's story of such glutinous sentimentality that nine could hang wallpaper with it), until she gives up the ghost.

The film is based on an over-long novel with the same name by Lawrence Sanders. Most of the changes the film

makes are for the better. An embarrassing sub-plot dealing with the vampire-like Celie Montfort, her beautiful teenage brother and their epicene manservant - a household which causes Blank to flip his lid in the first place - has been omitted. In the book Delaney is a captain, but here he's been busted down to sergeant; quite right, too, for Sinatra is much better at portraying authority at this level. It's sad, though, to see him wheedling information out of a snotty doctor with a winning smile and a twenty dollar bill, instead of, as would have been the case earlier, banging it out of him against a wall. One regrets the loss of only one episode from the book for its pleasantly anthropomorphic overtones: taken to a chophouse by the police surgeon to discuss head wounds in detail, Delaney orders and consumes with enjoyment a broiled kidney, a day or two after his wife has lost hers.

Brian Hutton doesn't use Hitchcock's blood-on-the-daisies technique, the startling introduction of the horrific into the everyday, but keeps the two rigidly apart. Half of the film belongs to realism: the police station, Delaney's apartment, the hospital ward, the other half - Blank's apartment, the streets at night with sinister steam seeping up through the manhole covers - to the horror movie. And for all the cutting between the two, a technique used about as subtly as Blank uses his ice-axe, no connexion is established. So much so, that when Delaney enters Blank's apartment to make the pinch, credibility - never particularly in evidence - evaporates completely.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the film is poor Faye Dunaway's fate. She spends the whole film lying on her back in a hospital bed with plastic tubing up her nose, growing yellow and yellow as she listens to the adventures of Honey Bunch. It can't have been a pleasant experience, but, on consideration, it might be marginally preferable to seeing the film for a second time.

Citizen Hughes

By Richard Combs

Melvin and Howard
Screen on the Green and Gite One Cinemas

Melvin and Howard is a gift of a subject - and the pity is that the director, Jonathon Demme, has scarcely got beyond the wrapping. The title suggests another buddy-cum-road-movie in the familiar American vein, and the opening is true to this type. Good-hearted, ever-optimistic Melvin Dummar - who might be Horatio Alger out West - is driving through the Nevada desert at night when he comes upon an old man who has had an accident on his motorcycle. He gives this apparent down-and-out a lift, insists that he join in a song he has composed and sent to him off in Las Vegas, after graciously conceding that if the old man wants to claim he is Howard Hughes, most mythical of self-made men, that is his business.

Howard thereupon disappears from the picture, and we take off on a quick jog through Melvin's efforts to make the same dream of success come true. He has an on-off marriage with Lynda (a delightful performance by Mary Steenburgen), sweats and hustles his way to the role of 'Million of the Month', but never seems to get more than a step ahead of the 'repo' (repossession) men. Eventually, he is married to someone else and working in a gas station when a sleek black car pulls into his life and leaves him with Howard Hughes's last will and testament, naming him a beneficiary. Melvin is presented with his dream on a platter - except that, in a moment of clear-sightedness, he realizes that it is just not possible. He tries to shuffle the will out of sight, when it is rediscovers the media and legal culture of

descent, and through the subsequent inquest Melvin seems good-naturedly to accept that he will never see the money. The will is thrown out of court. Melvin's real joy, the film suggests, lies in his memory of the time when he and Howard Hughes shared a song together.

The sentimentality of this moment might have been less apparent - or it might have registered more as a pleasant irony - if the film had been less content to coast on the surface of its subject. Melvin and Howard are the polar extremes of the American Success Story, and Demme has quite sensibly decided not to unbalance the equation by making more of Hughes as a character. But his canter through Melvin's life, a succession of tiny scenes, is too restricted in tone and too pedestrian in style to encompass any hint of the spirit of Hughes, the lure of his unreal materialism, and the rather movie-ish fantasy which he made of his life (a movie already made by Orson Welles; perhaps, in *Citizen Kane*).

Television images feeding the American Dream are a significant element of *Melvin and Howard*. Melvin forces Lynda to enter 'The Golden Gate' game show with her tap-dance routine, earning them \$10,000 which Melvin immediately squanders in conspicuous consumption. Much later, after the delivery of the will, we see newsreels of the real Hughes, engaged in such fantasy enterprises as an attempt to take off in his flying albatross. But these two sets of images have no resonance; beyond their immediate satirical point and Demme misses the point by keeping Hughes off-screen. We are left simply with Melvin's part of the popular mythology, whose real-life conceptions are rather simply summed up in the queer appearance of Melvin Dummar himself.

Domestic wars

By Lindsay Duguid

Together Against Him
York and Albany Theatre, Camden Town

Together Against Him is set in Belfast in 1973, and in a London Fringe currently suffering from the absence of *Time Out*, the necessary stage atmosphere is not hard to conjure up. The required setting of a shabby front parlour is also readily achieved in the York and Albany Theatre, which consists of a room above a pub in Camden Town. As with many fringe productions, the slightly uneasy direction and the sometimes less-than-word-perfect actors triumph over adversity by their passionate commitment to a very good text.

Philomena Muirner's play is about a Belfast family coping as best it can with a normality that entails never taking the same route twice, avoiding certain streets and obeying rules ('woman and less likely targets than lads like you'). Loud noises startle, stories of knockings and murders are commonplace and you jump at the sound of the telephone or doorbell ('They didn't use the code'). The family also endures the less dramatic effects of the war: poverty (sausages for supper again and go easy on the tea bags), bad housing (the lavatory is broken), obsession with the past, provincial prejudice and mental illness (the mother, 'like half the housewives in

the town', has to resort to Valium). This family, however, is also unhappy in its own particular way. The American father, who has left them voluntarily settled in Ulster before they that his children might become spoilt by the decadence of America. He is a professor at the University and thus represents the faint hope of a better life in the innocence of America. ('You could walk the streets in America') and the resources of literature, art and music. The three teenage children are torn between him and their mother who, having struggled free from her Belfast background, is prepared to fight to the death for her religion and for the virtues of keeping things nice, believing above all in the power of education, bettering yourself and feminism: 'Repeat after me', she tells her daughter, 'I am a woman, I have drive and energy.' The children, who already show signs of brainlessness, are quarrelsome, deceitful and adept at avoiding trouble. Events come to a head when there is a threat to their father (who is about to marry a Dublin girl) will withdraw his financial support. The children are encouraged by their mother to unite against him and to make him admit (by a combination of 'challenge' and 'boycott') to his responsibilities, but he skilfully evades the issue.

Although the play may be seen as a contemporary political allegory, it is also a demonstration of more timeless problems of divided loyalties, conflict and hatred. The writing is naturalistic with a leavening of jokes - both bitter and funny - and the mother, played by Annie Hayes, is a masterpiece of characterization.

Into that good night

By Robert Hewison

Going Gently
BBC TV

with the manic satisfaction of man who has communicated all the irrational agony of his situation.

The purpose of *Going Gently* is contained in that scene. It is to show what death can be like, in a manner that a documentary would be too discreet to do.

Though skilful in its suggestion of a whole hospital world outside the ward, *Going Gently* is less subtle in its use of quasi-caricature minor roles - the night nurse, the priest - to throw our sympathies towards the leading trio of Mackay, Wisdom and Dench. The play itself is an adaptation by Thomas Eliot from a novel, by the American Robert Downs, although the presumed transposition from Medicare to National Health is unconvincing. After the dying, there is the death: not with a bang, but not with a whimper.

The pairing of Fulton Mackay and Norman Wisdom in a hospital play might, in Mackay's case, raise hopes of hilarious institutional comedy, and in Wisdom's case, lower them with the prospect of winsome pathos. Both expectations are wrong: this is an angry drama about death and dying, and the only real joke in *Going Gently* is the title.

Mackay and Wisdom are coupled by the blind administrator, fate that puts two patients with terminal cancer in the same ward cubicle to die together. Mackay, articulate with Scots linguistic aggression, plays Professor Miller; Wisdom is Flood, the more conventional retired salesman. But all men wear the same shifts in hospital, and these social differences hardly matter. What matters is their attitude to dying. Mackay, the senior occupant of their glass-walled cubicle, meets the prospect of death with wilful disobedience: 'unable to break the thread of fate he breaks the hospital rules. I wish whisky and tranquility. Wisdom reacts more predictably: oscillating between disbelief and collapse, but he learns from Mackay. Such peace as there is between them is kept by a ward sister, Judi Dench.

Within the bell jar of the cubicle, we watch the pressures of fear, pain and fury shift back and forth between Wisdom and Mackay during the weeks in which they wait to die. The dying itself is a stinking, retching, business, and only Mackay's anger sustains them both to the end. Not that Mackay is shown in any way to be nobler than his horrifying scene in which he pours blood-red tomato juice all over the pages of a family album, brought in by Wisdom's wife. The wife is led away hysterical, and Mackay knocks back the drugs of pain.

commentary

Title deeds

By Nicholas Shrimpton

The Skin Game
Richmond Theatre

In 1920 Galsworthy's title was a piece of current, and evidently shocking, slang. Even in the first act, where the phrase retains its traditional sense of shuffling or fleeing, an aristocratic gentleman recoils when he hears it on the lips of his daughter. By the final curtain the words have moved beyond his generalized meaning to a specific connection with prize-fighting. 'What is it that gets loose when you begin a fight, and makes you what you think you're not?' asks that same father. 'Begin as you may, it ends in this - skin game.'

Few of Galsworthy's titles, of course, have even this degree of mystery to them. His fellow writers of the problem plays presented their dramatized dilemmas beneath discreetly non-committal labels. Cranley-Barker was monosyllabically explicit once, with *Waste* in 1907. St John Hankin was ironic even in such apparently open titles as *The Constant Star* and *The Return of the Prodigal*. Characteristically both men gave their intellectual wares an intriguing and underconstruable wrapping. Plays called *The Madras House*, *The Voyage of the Cassini* and *The Cassini Engagement* could easily have been farces or melodramas. The titles hint rather than tell.

Galsworthy suffered from no such inhibition. Throughout his twenty years in the theatre he pressed ideas upon audiences with a positively evangelical enthusiasm. *Skin* is about class, *Loyalties* about loyalties, *Justice* about justice. Even *The Silver Bay* (1911) and *The Eldest Son* present their central exhibit with a clarity and determination which make it hard to forget their author's early training as a barrister. And, having once decided to treat the jury as idiots, Galsworthy is not able to change his tone. There is no merely announced, it is echoed and re-echoed. Curtains fall upon symbolic tableaux. Verbal repetitions and dramatic irony hammer home the points. The effect is the dramatic equivalent of shouting into a bearing.

Yet the curious thing about this theatrical manner is that it is simultaneously insistent and indecisive. Frank Swinnerton observed in 1935 that Galsworthy was 'too modest to be severe'. The judgement accurately reflects his tendency to present problems rather than answers. *Justice* might seem an exception, since it is one of the few plays known to have produced an immediate social reform (Winston Churchill, as Home Secretary, was so moved when he saw it in 1910 that he abolished the indiscriminate use of solitary confinement). But even



A scene from Tom Robertson's play *Ours* (1866), one of the illustrations in Clive Swift's *The Performing World of the Actor* (1969). £5.95, 0 241 10585 4, just published.

Justice depicts a criminal who is legitimately convicted and permits a generous interpretation of his accusers' motives.

The plays which address themselves to larger topics than the law are still more resolutely even-handed. The plot of *The Skin Game* is a small campaign in the class war. Country gentlemen condescend to a newly arrived self-made man. He, in return, threatens to build factory chimneys outside their windows. Protracted financial and social skirmishes eventually lead to an ambivalent stand-off. It would be a wise audience, however, which emerged from the theatre with a clear sense of which side the author was on. The middle classes are brutal but cruelly provoked. The aristocrats are scrupulous only as long as their interests are undisturbed. Galsworthy offers neither a preference nor an alternative.

Class warfare, in other words, provides the plot rather than the theme of *The Skin Game*. For theme, as always, we are left with a bare-knuckle instinct, the self-generating power of hatred, is the subject of the play; the social detail is merely its surface. Quarrels, Galsworthy suggests, are best left unstated. Why they start, how they may be stopped, and who should win them remain urgent but insoluble questions.

Strident uncertainty of this kind is not a note to which the contemporary

British theatre is accustomed. Problems should be obscure, or they should be neatly attended with solutions. Problems as problems are a forgotten theatrical interest, a stylistic foreign country which can easily induce failure of nerve. Someone's nerve has clearly failed in Clifford Williams's production of *The Skin Game*. Taking a large company on the road with three productions in repertory (*The Devil's Disciple* and *The Cherry Orchard* are the companion pieces) is a difficult business. But it is not a practical difficulty which sinks *The Skin Game*, it is a difficulty of style.

These actors perform a problem play without realizing what it is they are handling, and end up offering something best described as drawing-room tragedy. Dark memories of Agatha Christie played in weekly repertory at the best of times, and Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara* at the worst, are the best vehicle for a Galsworthy revival night, in fact, be the early play *Joy*, where the uncharacteristic ambiguity of the title itself suggests that the author is allowing more scope than usual to the people of the play. Joy, at first merely a reference to the name of a character, eventually becomes a tactical statement of the (surprising) theme of sexual fulfillment. A production which found a way of coping with the rural whimsy of the first few pages could do a lot with the rest. For Galsworthy's reputation. But it would need to be a good deal better than this production of *The Skin Game*.

Two small parts and two large provide something to shore against these ruins. Robert Aldous is a dogged Dawker. Jonathan Coy, as Rolf Hornblower, fills his tiny cameo with an authentic sense of the man marooned between social classes. On a larger scale

encounter with a gauche LSE student. Adroitly playing off barbed suavity against raw kindness, *Love Bites* here becomes a cruelly funny counterpoint - as it also does when, in a pub, Susan meets her man, an amiable heap of sound engineering jargon and beery bonhomie bemusedly transfixed by her spiky nervousness.

Sardonically observing these brief encounters, the play is excellent. Deftly embarrassed and embarrassing, its very strong cast don't miss a quip. Then, in the second act, things start to go astray. Intelligent, witty comedy, sparked off by shrewd social and psychological notion, disappears behind a cloudy generalization about men's treatment of women. In support of this, resemblances between the two girls now hastily accumulate. Joanna's first experience of love-making was a physical fiasco; Susan's, an emotional one. Susan's first lover, painfully jettisoned her making the point more starkly, Joanna's first lover, half-naked from a car. Both girls break down, never fully recover, and blunder into a second, roofter relationship. Susan, as a doer, and Joanna, as a seer, as a stilling domestic trio of herself, 'little Graham' and 'little Orahm'; Joanna is traumatized a second time when the new lover, she, is opening out to suggest

bringing his friend round for a threesome. Again, both girls break down: then they break out for a new start. The play's opening scenes, it is now apparent, represent their doomed attempt to do this.

Understated, abrasive, and accurate in its funny first act, *Love Bites* becomes methodistic and sentimentally biased in its duller second one. For all the sexual authenticity, it is founded on a romantic cliché: the lives of its two girls are ravaged for ever by the heartbreak of first love that failed. The novelistic nature of this is here camouflaged by outstandingly vivid performances, convincing to the last detail of intonation and posture, from Kay Adhes and Rosalind Adler. And the women are given an added dimension by being viewed from two different angles. Aloce, in monologue, they are one side of themselves. In company, through dialogue, they show another. The men, on the other hand, are allowed no inner life. Flat and synthetic, they are merely plastic monologues from the feminist bestiary (snaky lecher, woolly bear, hug-you-to-death husband, quick-on-the-hood desecrator). Stereotype collides, oddly, with originality in achievement, as well as technique. *Love Bites* is proud to striking contrasts.

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Oxford University Press

Two by two

By Peter Kemp

Love Bites
ICA

Contrasts and parallels provide the framework for Chris Hawes's new play, *Love Bites*. Socially, its two main characters are poles apart. Creatively self-possessed Joanna is upper-middle-class; Susan, bubbling with self-mockery, is working-class. Joanna comes from the Home Counties, went to Roedean, took a good degree at Cambridge; Susan comes from Manchester, went to the local Grammar, and dropped out from teachers' training college. Joanna has a tasteful flat near Primrose Hill and a prosperous job with J. Walter Thompson; Susan rents a seamy room in Finsbury Park, works in a canteen by day, and, in the evening, as an usherette. Alternating between these two girls, the play both contrasts and compares them - for they have one thing immediately in common: each has advertised in *Time Out*'s lonely hearts column.

The first act concentrates on the blind dates that come from this. In a wine-bar, Joanna negotiates her way through a hilariously hopeless

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commentary

Building for socialism

By J.M. Richards

Lubetkin and Tecton
Arncliffe Gallery, Bristol

Here is an evocative reminder of the aspirations and - as they seem now - the endearingly innocent achievements of the architectural avant-garde of the 1930s: when what Henry-Russell Hitchcock christened the International Style was introduced to the English public through the efforts of, among others, Berthold Lubetkin and Tecton. Tecton was the collective name of a group of young architects brought together by the Russian-born Lubetkin in 1932 after he had moved from Paris to London. Lubetkin was the oldest of the group, the most experienced and in every way the leader; for although it is fair that this exhibition should by its title give credit to the whole group, every member of it would acknowledge that the work it shows reflects Lubetkin's ideas and that it developed always in the direction in which he led it.

And there at the opening - along with a couple of the surviving original members and Sir Ove Arup, the engineer to whom Tecton's constructional achievements owed so much - was Lubetkin himself, round and sprightly in spite of his eighty years, a rare encounter indeed at an architectural gathering. For although he was a celebrity until thirty years ago, he has been only a legend since. In 1950, when Lubetkin was only forty-nine, he suddenly retired from architecture, turned to farming and has hardly been seen again by his former colleagues.

Forty-nine is young for a recluse, and his reasons for becoming one were complex. Ostensibly the reason was his disillusionment with the outcome of the biggest opportunity England had offered him. In 1948 he was appointed architect-planner of one of the post-war new towns, Peterlee, to be constructed in the coal-mining area of County Durham. As designed by him it was going to be urban instead of suburban and a place rather than an answer to a housing shortage. But local politics, the Coal Board's changeability about its programme of coal-getting underneath the site, and a class of personalities defeated it. Lubetkin felt he could do nothing but resign, but his simultaneous retirement from any part in the architectural world was due, it may be thought, to something more profound than disappointment at a lost opportunity: to a long-term sense that he was not going to reach, in the intellectual climate of the country he had adopted, the political and aesthetic goals on which his architectural philosophy was founded.

His political ideals were left-wing. He believed that architecture had significance only when placed at the service of the community and when helping to create a more egalitarian society. His aesthetic ideals were based on a strict formal discipline, derived to some extent from his training in Paris under Auguste Perret. But he saw no sign of the evident gap between architectural principles and social amelioration (narrowing, nor could he see any hope of teaching discipline in architectural standards to the English in view of their tendency to waver towards the impulsive and the romantic).

By means of its sub-title, "Architecture and Social Commitment", the exhibition attempts to link the work of the displays with Lubetkin's personal conception of the role in which he saw himself. His integrity as a designer and the sense of mission he never lost are revealed in nearly all of it, but although it includes some of the best work done in England in the

1930s in the spirit of the Modern Movement, it also reveals the nature of his ultimate disillusionment. His fundamental aims may have been social and political, but his influence on English architecture was wholly aesthetic. He found himself presiding over little more than a change of style and building technique. His patrons and admirers moreover were - and remained - a middle-class intellectual elite. His best buildings, such as the Highpoint flats in Highgate and various small houses, were for their use. Others, as scornful critics repeatedly point out, ignoring the zoo buildings' role as the setting for popular entertainments. Only when the war was about to put a stop to all building were Lubetkin and Tecton adopted as architects by the socially progressive London borough of Finsbury. They completed one civic building there - a health centre - and although this was followed after the war by several blocks of working-class flats for the same borough, these were finished with the help of different partners (Tecton was dissolved in 1947 after becoming dispersed during the war) and seemed to have lost the classic grace of the partnership's earlier buildings.

The Finsbury housing was in many ways pioneer work, but it met the same fate that undermined the value of nearly all the public authority housing schemes launched during the period of reconstructional euphoria after the war. These schemes were conceived by the more responsible architects of

the time as part of a total contribution to the creation of improved living and environmental standards, but as local authorities lost their nerve, changed their political allegiances or began to conserve their resources more carefully, the very elements in their housing designs that had made them socially and environmentally advanced were eliminated one by one: the nurseries and shopping centres, the laundries and libraries, the landscaping and recreation areas. What was left was simply the grim rectangular shapes of the housing itself, puzzling subsequent critics who were aware of the modern architects' involvement with the brave new world but who found they could hardly distinguish their products from the mass of public authority housing created by the cynical financial exploitation of system building or by the equally cynical political urge towards impressive housing statistics.

One merit of the Lubetkin and Tecton exhibition, which is sponsored by the Arts Council and has been most diligently and skilfully assembled by Peter Coe (helped by others at Bristol University, where he teaches), is that it enables one to grasp the ideals and intentions of the 1930s and 1940s which lie behind the sad reality of what post-war urban building, as well as to admire Lubetkin's exceptional talent and learn for the first time the facts of his early career. The exhibition remains at the Arncliffe until June 20, when it goes on tour initially to Oxford, Sheffield and Brighton.

Hackney meshes

By Frances Spalding

Leon Kossoff
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford

The acclaim recently given Leon Kossoff is historically apposite. He satisfies the new demand for a return to representativeness without denying the modernist tenet that a painting is an object in its own right. Here is "social" art in fine-art terms. But instead of Greenberg's prescribed flatness, we find canvases with swept, flicked, dragged and dribbled paint, paint which simultaneously describes form and insists on its own substantiality. While looking at a detail one has the impression that the surrounding configurations are still moving, heaving and reforming like boiling tar.

An exhibition of Kossoff's paintings, produced during the last decade, has been mounted by Oxford's Museum of Modern Art to celebrate the completion of the museum's new extension. These turbulent paintings require the kind of bare, functional, morally earnest aesthetic which the museum's new galleries display. With Kossoff, paint remains undisturbedly paint and the drawing is blunt and direct. His expressionism arises partly from his personal experience and partly from the anti-academic teaching of David Bomberg. As his pupil, Kossoff learnt to convey not just his perceptions but also his physical or emotional sensibility in front of landscape or figure. In the several portraits of his father exhibited here, he uses paint to suggest anger and despair; the thick impasto hangs in folds about the face or sweeps down into the bent seated figure. The usually attractive, serious quality of oils here plays an oppressive role.

Over the whole exhibition hovers a mood of angry despair. The views of Hackney and the North London Line from Dalston Lane are painted in bleak celebration of that which Kossoff admires in his quest: "this strange, ever

changing light, the endless streets and the shuddering feel of the sprawling city fingers in my mind like a faintly shimmering memory of a long forgotten, perhaps never experienced childhood, which, if rediscovered and illuminated, would ameliorate the pain of the present."

Though the selection is generous and impressive, it is clear from this show that Kossoff is neither a great colourist nor a fine draftsman. Moreover, his compositions often border on the banal. But these weaknesses are obliterated by boldness, by the energy and attack that keep the paint incessantly moving across the picture surface. On a small scale, his handling is more dexterous and affectionate; when the subject is enlarged there is often a loss of subtlety and an increased violence of form. Occasionally the artist seems more concerned with the process of making than with his subject. In the catalogue three photographs appear of Kossoff subjects which confirm the gulf between actuality and interpretation. His concerns are blatantly totalitarian: there is a fullness of means but not always of content. Kossoff's father, despite his multiple appearances, remains impersonal.

Most of these canvases are best viewed close to. The persistent run of his brush evokes the eye with its buoyancy. We discover where the brush has lifted or dropped, thin threads of paint, creating a rich mesh which is visually entangling. One steps back to perceive the subject as a whole; the overall design does not always cohere. But this occasional failure is not surprising, given the degree of chance on which the artist's style depends. More often than not, frenetic energy is the binding force; it animates the Dalston Lane series where spire, roof-top, trees, figures and billboards merge into one pulsing anonymous whole. Dark, foreboding and fearsome, these are surely some of the most haunting views of London produced in recent years.

The style is the man

By Oswyn Murray

The Image of Augustus
British Museum

The most surprising fact about the new exhibition at the British Museum, *The Image of Augustus*, is that a single museum could put on a display of such a standard from its own resources. Admittedly over 250 sculpted portraits of Augustus are known from all parts of the Roman Empire; and discreet use of plaster casts and earlier Republican and Greek portraiture fills out the picture, while coins and gems show the influence of the official iconography at all levels. But the impression is of a sampling of a wealth of material not normally on display.

In his youth the future emperor was famous for his physical beauty; Cicero referred to his later murderer as "a divine young man"; he was indeed fond of dressing up as a god, preferably the young Apollo, the god of culture or (as his enemies put it) of destruction. It was this physical attractiveness which made his soldiers give allegiance to an unknown eighteen-year old in preference to their beloved general Mark Antony. Even in old age Suetonius claims he kept his beauty; he had clear and penetrating eyes, and was self-conscious enough to be pleased when men averted their gaze as if from the sun. The less attractive aspects of his appearance, his poor teeth and small stature, were naturally not reproduced in the official version that he chose to display: the exhibition concentrates on the character of this idealized representation.

The Roman republican tradition of portraiture does little to prepare for this vision of "the restorer of the Republic": it preferred the brutal realities of power, and sought for character not universalized. Susan Walker and Andrew

Burnett, the organizers of the exhibition and authors of the excellent booklet which accompanies it, *The Image of Augustus* (British Museum Publications, £2.95, 7141 1270 4), rightly lay emphasis on the Greek and Hellenistic origins of the new style. The earlier tradition of royal portraiture had eschewed the outwardappings of royalty, the chief symbol of which was a simple diadem or scarf tied in the hair; instead it sought to render power through the idealizing tendency of Greek sculpture, and concentrated on the eyes as the expressive of the inner man, a calm serenity suggesting the confidence of rule rightly exercised. Augustus took this style and reformed it, with the result of suggesting that he was not merely "first of the world, but worthy of his seat and conscious of the burden of his duties. This is well shown by the finest piece in the exhibition, the famous bronze head looted by Sudanese tribesmen in one of his raids on Upper Egypt, and on fully buried in the foreground of their commemorative temple.

Such a combination of official grace and classical repose is the founder of the empire created serious problems for later rulers: one senses the uneasy attempts to introduce individually into the official portraits of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, while retaining the Augustan style. One senses, too, the relief of artists at the new realism possible under the Flavian emperors, whose personal style is revealed in the consensus of their features: one might be in the presence of any *maison* boss. Yet Augustus was the biggest Godfather of them all in his time: did he really look like a Greek god? The style became the man; and it is Augustan portraiture that has created a standard for western representations of royal power in the present day. The wicked king is always ugly, handsomeness and virtue are the attributes of the royal prince.

Squares for the spirit

By Antonia Phillips

Brice Marden
Whitechapel Gallery

Brice Marden (born in 1938 in Bronxville, New York) works in the wake of the great field painters like Rothko, Barnett Newman, Albers, and Ad Reinhardt. His recent paintings consist of monochrome panels, either jammed together or separated by gaps of an inch or two. The panels, long rectangles, hung vertically or in column and lintel arrangements, vary in width, but do so precisely, dividing paintings into halves and thirds, and halves of thirds, and so on. This device, along with the dominance of the rectangle and the thickness of the stretchers, creates a classic order, stable and static. Marden's graphic work elaborates this architectural quality, with its motifs of grids, squares, and square arches, suggestive of doors ("Thira") and windows (trapezoidal, even). He is sparing in colour here, using ink and graphite to produce a variety of textures, from the gritty to the gleam of coal.

Unlike those of many colour field painters, Marden's paintings have tactile qualities: the surface is not overwhelmed by colour, is not neutral. The warp of the canvas is virtually invisible under the smooth, unbroken, almost rubbery paint (Marden uses a mixture of oils and wax, with applied with brush, spatula and knife). The colours, too, are subtle, muddy, reds, greys, mustard yellows, dull greens, deep blues and blacks. Impure as his colours

are, Marden's broad stripes lead to a more complex complementarity ("Cagliostro", "Moroccan Painting", "Thira") and the primaries ("Concrete", "Sober and flat at first, his colours, acquire with time a deeper luminosity, and in this respect are closer to those of Rothko's dark paintings than to the brightnesses of Newman or Reinhardt, although they preserve a wall-like solidity. Within these "Spartan" paintings ("his own words") some of these paintings are handsome ("Moroccan", "Humiliation").

The Whitechapel Gallery is a perfect environment for Brice Marden's work: the multi-panelled paintings, the space is large enough to enable one to take in many works from one viewpoint, to allow repetition to play its role. This is especially important in the case of the *Annunciation Series* (reminiscent of Newman's *Serious Situation*), five four-panelled paintings corresponding to the Virgin's responses to Gabriel's message: "I am afraid the third, 'Interrogatio', is mysteriously absent from the show."

'Why South Africa Will Survive'

Sir, - Simon Jenkins, in his review of my book *Why South Africa Will Survive* (May 8), takes Peter Duignan and me to task for the way in which we "exaggerate the links between African nationalism and the Soviet Union - the early ANC was a remarkably moderate body". Had your reviewer read our book with more care he would have found that we described African nationalism as a multi-faceted movement. As regards the ANC, we state that it began as "an ultra-loyalist body representing the emergent African bourgeoisie" (p. 55), and that its political programme was, "for most of its history, extremely moderate" (p. 124). We demonstrate how the ANC moved to the left in the 1950s, how the ANC leadership absorbed cadres drawn from the South African Communist Party (SACP), a body whose policies were marked by unwavering loyalty towards the Moscow-dominated party of the communist movement. The ANC's official journal *Sesibho* mirrors SACP's line and Moscow's interpretation of world politics in every major respect. Interestingly enough, the South African communists agree with us, rather than with your liberal scholars who play down communist participation in the ANC's work. An authoritative review in *The African Communist* (official organ of the SACP, no. 72, 1978, pp. 113-115) takes "bourgeois" scholarship to task for deliberately playing down communist participation in the ANC and the African liberation movement in general. Perhaps your reviewer would let us know what criteria he would accept for demonstrating the existence of close links between the Soviet Union and a "liberation movement".

K. M. WILSON,
School of History, The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

'Mao'

Sir, - In his review of Ross Terrill's biography of Mao (March 6), Simon Leys unleashes a gratuitous assault on me. He claims that my *New York Times* article (August 13, 1980) "In China, 70's Horrors" "informed his readers that various atrocities had taken place in China during the Maoist era... nearly ten years after even lazy undergraduates were aware of them..."

I called attention to a barbaric urban campaign of 1970 which is not even described in *Shadow Man*, let alone a "lazy undergraduate". Leys apparently believes that everything worth knowing about China's recent cruel past is known. He is wrong.

'Retreat From Power'

Sir, - In her eagerness to demonstrate what even I readily concede, that Sir Byre Crowe and Sir Arthur Nicolson were really not one and the same person, Miss Crowe (Letters, May 29) makes certain errors which if left uncorrected might seriously distort the picture of the problems faced by the makers of British foreign policy in the summer of 1914.

Russian pressure on the British position in Central Asia steadily increased through 1913 and 1914. One official dealing with these matters wrote on June 2, 1914: "For British interests the situation is most alarming." Following this, Crowe predicted that if nothing was done, Russia would within twelve months have taken over the neutral in addition to the northern zone, and have acquired the whole of the north coast of the Persian Gulf. Like Nicolson a month earlier, he suggested a re-negotiation of the Persian Question, and as "the only possible way now of keeping Russia out of south Persia", the taking there of certain active steps. By exaggerating the geographical area to which these steps applied, Miss Crowe converts his suggestions into a policy for "standing up to Russia". That this was far from being the case is borne out by Sir George Clerk's memo of July 23, 1914, and by Crowe's reception of it. Starting from the position that the "Russian advance" and the Persian "inequality" were creating serious danger to British continuing existence as an Empire, and (not surprisingly in view of the fact that Russia was "the one Power with whom it is our paramount duty to cultivate the most cordial relations"), Clerk concluded that sacrifices had to be made to her. Admitting that Britain could not make good a claim to the neutral zone, it seemed preferable to "make up our minds to a definite sacrifice of some part of our interests". These included the oil areas of

the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and part of the Kerman mining concession. Heavy as such sacrifices were, they were relatively small compared with those that would otherwise have to be made in the near future. In welcoming this memo Crowe, like Clerk, the India Office and the Government of India, hoped that by pushing British trade and commerce in the region south of the old neutral zone, the "breathing space" thus bought would be well used. So did Nicolson.

The points are: that the exercise of re-opening the Persian Question was regarded by all who took part in it as an exercise in concessions, a search for sacrifices, another retreat - to a position which, with time, with money, and with luck might be made defensible; that, in the context of the "Russian tide" and the fact that Britain was "impotent to absorb so much Persian oil to assume any responsibility for its good government" (Crowe, July 23, 1914) any line between Russophilia and Russophobia becomes very fine indeed; and that any explanation of British support for Russia and France in July and August 1914 which ignored the Central Asian background would be quite inadequate.

K. M. WILSON,
School of History, The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

'The Private Case'

Sir, - Timothy d'Arch Smith in his review of *The Private Case* (May 29) wonders whether the BL has a Private Case in its department of manuscripts also. It does not.

D. P. WALEY,
Keeper of Manuscripts, The British Library, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

Ernst Jünger and the Nazis

Sir, - Reading Michael Butler's review of *Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945* by Ronald Taylor (May 15), I stumble over the words "... Carossa, Jünger and Benn who made their individual accommodation with the [National Socialist] regime". So far as Jünger is concerned, any accusation is unjustified (unless any one who published anything in Germany during these twelve years counts as an accommodation). Indeed, his *Memorial* of 1939 was read by many as a denunciation of the regime's butcheries and cruelties.

ROLF GRUNER,
The Cottage, Upper Tankersley, nr Bamsley, South Yorkshire.

Modern Thinkers

Sir, - Humphrey Carpenter's review of Justin White's *Makers of Modern Culture* (May 22) remarked that *The Penguin Dictionary of Modern Thought* "logged all the thought but none of the thinkers". There is in fact a companion volume, called *The Foundational Biographical Dictionary of Modern Thought* (to be published in Spring 1982) which will log, not all of the thinkers, perhaps, but 1,700 of them.

HELEN FRASER,
Fontaine Paperbacks, 14 St James's Place, London SW1A 1PS.

The *Letters of Edward Fitzgerald* edited by Alfred McKibbin Terhune and Annabelle Burdick Terhune, Volumes 1-4, are published by Princeton University Press, and not Columbia and Princeton University Press as stated in our issue of February 27, 1981.

groups in China's ruling caste are "les nostalgiques du maoïsme pur" who remain powerful enough that with regard to Mao "il faut donc conserver le vieux totem sur les autels".

As Leys's arguing both sides of the Mao cult indicates, his attempt to discredit all other China specialists keeps him from even getting his facts straight. His personal, irresponsible and erroneous attacks on me, Terrill and so many other specialists stem from Leys's evident belief that only he can be trusted on China. To claim it is to prove himself truly incredible.

EDWARD FRIEDMAN,
Congress of the United States Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515.

Dashiell Hammett

Sir, - Readers will be pleased to know that *Shadow Man*, Richard Layman's biography of Dashiell Hammett, reviewed in last week's TLS, will be published in the UK by Junction Books on August 13, price £9.95 (ISBN 0 86245 027 6).

ANNE BEECH,
Junction Books, 33 Ivor Place, London NW1.

'The Private Case'

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Among this week's contributors

ROBERT M. ADAMS's recent books include *Had I Known: Fugitive Papers on the Dark Side*, 1978, and *The Last Museum: Glimpses of Vanished Originals* which was reviewed in last week's TLS.

DAWN ADES is a lecturer in the History of Art at the University of Essex.

FIROUZ BEAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

BERNARD BERNHARDT's novel *The Roman Persuasion* was published earlier this year.

JULIA BAIGES is the author of *Night Visitors: the Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*, 1977.

HUGH BROWN is the author of *Taciturnity*, 1973.

ANTHONY BURGESS's most recent novel is *Earthly Powers*, 1981. His opera *The Blooms of Dublin* will be broadcast next year.

LOAN CARVER was Chief of the Defence Staff from 1973-76. His most recent book is *The Apostles of Ability*, 1979.

A. O. J. CHICKS's books include *Truth to Life*, 1974.

RICHARD COMES is the editor of *Sight and Sound*.

WENVOY CYPE's pamphlet of poems *Across the Cur* was published last year by Piat Press.

H. S. FEENE's most recent book is *The Disease of Government*, 1978.

PETER GAY's books include *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation of the Science of Freedom, 1660-1789* and *Style in History*, 1975.

PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH is the author of *John Addington Symonds, 1964*, and *Havelock Ellis*, 1980.

K. H. D. HALEY is Professor of Modern History at the University of Sheffield.

ROBERT HALSBURN's most recent book is *The Rope of the Lock and its Illustrations 1714-1896*, 1980.

HUGH HAUGHTON is a lecturer in English at the University of York.

CHRISTOPHER HILL's books include *Milton and the English Revolution*, 1977.

ROBERT HEWISON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60* was published earlier this year.

JAMES HUNTER is the author of *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 1976.

PETER KEMP's critical study *H. G. Wells and the Cuddling Ape* will be published by Macmillan later this year.

WALTER LAQUEUR's books include *Weimar: a Cultural History 1918-33*, 1974, and *Terrorism*, 1978.

JOHN LYNN is Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies and Professor of Latin American History at the University of London.

PETER MARSHALL is Professor of American Studies at the University of Manchester.

JOHN NAUGHTON is a lecturer in Systems at the Open University.

REDMOND O'HANLON has recently completed a study of Joseph Conrad and Charles Darwin.

D. D. R. OWEN's books include *The Legend of Roland: a Pageant of the Middle Ages*, 1973.

SIR JAMIE RICHARDS was editor of *The Architectural Review* from 1937 to 1971.

STEPHEN ROSKILL's latest book is *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty*, 1981. He is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge.

PROF. SHAW is a lecturer in Italian at Bedford College, London.

NICHOLAS SHIRBRIDGE is a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

MICHAEL SLATKIN's edition of *The Chuzzlewicks* by the Squire Charles Dickens Collection was published in 1975.

FRANCES SPALDING's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

JUHN SPUSILO's most recent play, *The British Empire: Part One*, was produced last year and will be published in the autumn.

E. S. TURNER's most recent book is *Dear Old Blighty*, 1980.

DAVID WATKIN's books include *The Life and Work of C. R. Cockerell*, 1975.

CHARLES WHEELER was BBC correspondent in Washington from 1965-1975.

PHYLLIS WILLMOTT is the author of *Growing up in a London Village*, 1979.

HENRY WOUHUYSEN is a Junior Research Fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford.

LARSEN ZIFF is Caroline Donovan Professor of English at Johns Hopkins University.

Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, July 3. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, P.O. Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 9EX, and marked "Author, Author". The solution and result will appear in our issue of July 10.

Competition No. 53

1. Buy a book in brown paper. From Faber and Faber. Tosses - trip, tumble and caper...

2. With a flash flat in Chelsea of a bogus elegance, With surrealist pictures, and books, With a degree of complacency which nothing could enhance, And without one sole well-wisher to Kick him in the pants.

3 To these, with hope and terror dumb, The unfledged MS. authors come: Thou printest all - and selgest some - My Murray.

Result of Competition No. 54

Winner: Donald Humes, 32 The Fairway, North Wembley, Middlesex. Answers:

1 Shall gentle Coleridge pass unnoticed here, To porgie ode end tumid stanza dear? Though themes of innocence amuse e him best, Yet still Obscurity's a welcome guest. - Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

2 A puffy, anxious, obstructed-looking, fatish old man, hobbled about with us, talking with a kind of solemn emphasis on matters which were of no interest (and even reading pieces in proof of his opinions therein). - Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (describing Coleridge).

3 Coleridge came in with a sack full of books, etc. and a branch of Mountain ash. He has been attacked by colic. - Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals*.

The prison-cell detective

By John Spurling

JORGE LUIS BORGES and ADOLFO BLOY-CASARES:
Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi
Translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni
160pp. Allen Lane. £5.95.
0 7139 1421 1

Borges first met Adolfo Bloy-Casares in 1930, when Bloy was sixteen and Borges, who had already published three books of poems, three books of essays and a biography, thirty-one. Borges has called his friendship with Bloy "one of the chief events of my life" and added with characteristic modesty:

When we began to work together, Bloy was really and secretly the master... Opposing my taste for the pathetic, the sentimental, and the baroque. Bloy made me feel that quietness and restraint are more desirable.

Bloy appears under his own name in the early story *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* — one of Borges's crucial transitions between writing essays and fiction — as the friend with whom the narrator discovers the existence of the mysterious land of Uqbar. Soon afterwards the two friends collaborated on a set of detective stories which was published in 1942 as *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi* by H. Bustos Domecq; and they used this pseudonym again for further collaborative stories which appeared only in magazines or were privately printed.

Six Problems contains precious little evidence of Bloy's taste for quietness and restraint, unless it is in the character of Parodi himself, an ex-barber serving a long prison sentence for a murder he didn't commit and forced to listen in the elaborate Bruvingsque monologues of a series of excitable visitors to his cell. Parodi is the *ne plus ultra* of the intellectual sleuth, his actions more or less confined to brewing himself a cup of *maldé* and reading newspapers, his characteristic being "sententious and fat", with a shaved head and "unusually wise eyes", and his speech in occasional questions along the way and a brisk unravelling of the mystery at the end of each story. Whether or not these unravellings or bits of what actually happened reflect Bloy's influence on Borges, they now read as the most Borgesian parts of the book, comparable in method, though

not in resonance, to the stories in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, first published a year before *Six Problems* but incorporated in 1944 into *Ficciones* (Borges's bibliography is nearly as labyrinthine as his plots). As Borges wrote in his prologue to *The Garden of Forking Paths*, "the composition of vast books is a laborious and impoverishing extravagance... A better course of procedure is to pretend that these books already exist, and then to write a commentary." But in *Six Problems* Parodi's slim résumés are preceded by the prolix explanations of those involved in the crime and it is the predominance of these other voices, these extra, deliberately ridiculous and unreliable narrators, which makes the book both laborious and extravagant.

The original idea for *Six Problems* seems to have been Bloy's. At my rate Borgea has him propounding it at the beginning of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*. Bloy Casares had dined with me that night and talked to us at length about a great scheme for writing a novel in the first person, using a narrator who omitted or corrupted what happened and who ran into various contradictions, so that only a handful of readers, a very small handful, would be able to decipher the horrible or banal reality behind the novel.

With the addition of the prison-cell detective to stand in for the small handful of alert readers, the formula is complete and must have looked promising, given that either of the collaborators had a gift for dramatic monologue. On the evidence of this book, neither had, and although Bloy may have made better attempts elsewhere (I have not read his solo works), Borges has steered clear of characterized monologue in all his later work; indeed he has tended to avoid characterization altogether. His characters do not aspire to be individuals with a sense of interior life but types (the traitor, the Jew, the theologian, the gauchito) or

entries in encyclopaedia (Herbert Ashe, Dr Brodie). The monologues in *Six Problems* are types — the leading actor, the man of letters, the society lady, the small-time crook, etc. — with a satirical dimension. They are meant, as well as unwittingly corrupting the truth of what has happened, to point up certain absurdities in pre-war Argentinean society. It is hard for an English reader forty years later to assess their accuracy, but they come across as overdone, absurd at two removes, as if the authors had satirized conventional Aunt Sallies instead of the actual people around them. The difficulty for English readers living in Britain is compounded by the translator's North American idiom. Norman Thomas di Giovanni has done much to naturalize and demystify Borges's work in English, especially the later, plainer tales, but the Parodi stories are a tissue of old-fashioned mannerisms and cannot be partly re-textured into many, up-to-date American. To take one small example: the sentence "From this morning poetry, I was suddenly yanked into the prose of life by a knock at my door", put in the mouth of a flowery old actor, destroys such consistency and credibility as the actor has by making him puncture his own style. The only monologue that achieves steady conviction in this idiom is, obviously enough, the small-time crook's.

The book's dust-jacket claims that "these stories are an essential key to understanding Borges's development as a writer". That is certainly true. They belong to his most fertile period, when the provincial poet and man of letters was evolving into one of the most original and entertaining storytellers of our time and they help to define the nature as well as the limitations of his talent. But they are strictly for a very small handful of readers, the Borges freaks. As detective stories they are too far-fetched, as satire too clumsy, and as literature too trivial.

Future shock

By Charles Wheeler

PAUL E. ERDMAN:
The Last Days of America
245pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.50.
436 14831 5

In his latest novel, Paul Erdman returns to the theme of an earlier book, *The Crash of '79*, the decline of America's will to lead the West and the opportunities this presents to more irresponsible allies to take the world to the brink of disaster. In that instance, the arch-adventurer was the Shah of Iran, eventually incinerated — together with the oilfields of Kuwait, Iran and Saudi Arabia — in a nuclear attack launched by the Shah in a bid to gain control of the Persian Gulf. The attempt backfired; but in the ensuing energy crisis there was a run on the banks, causing the dollar to collapse and the lights to go out all over the West.

Mr Erdman's new book takes us into the later 1980s. The lights have come on again, but the one-term Presidencies of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, followed by the election of yet another mediocre, have reduced Europe's faith in American leadership to an intermittent flicker.

Russia, meanwhile, by indecision and by the interminable tug-of-war between the administration and the Congress, has fallen behind in the nuclear arms race. West Germany, feeling uniquely vulnerable to Russian attack, has overcome its national guilt complex and is reverting to type. Willi Brandt and Helmut Schmidt have been discarded. The new favourite is the Bavarian conservative, Franz Josef Strauss, who, in a comeback as unexpected as Richard Nixon's resurgence in 1968, has been swept into the Chancellorship on a promise to give Germany its own independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr Erdman is a master of timing. His book appears here, just as German conservatives have scored their first electoral victory in West Berlin as

Britain considers reducing its forces in Germany, and as Herr Schmidt, following an abortive summit meeting with Mr Reagan in Washington, struggles to head off a revolt among his fellow Social Democrats against the stationing of medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe.

By 1985, the gap between the United States and West Germany can no longer be bridged. Reagan and Schmidt are but a chapter in the history books and, with Franz Josef Strauss at the helm, West Germany is about to take its rightful place to the world as a superpower. It is a prospect Mr Erdman finds distasteful as the personality of the unfortunate Herr Strauss, whom he depicts as an unrepentant, malevolent demagogue who, on escapes identification with Hitler by virtue of the fact that he is not on record as having advocated the slaughter of Jews.

What Erdman's Strauss does have in common with the Nazi leaders is a belief in Germany's unfulfilled destiny, the cultural and intellectual superiority of its people, and their historic duty to avenge past humiliations. Aided by a consortium of *Wirtschaftswunderkinder* (composed of the Deutsche Bank, Siemens, A.G. and Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blom O.M.B.B.), and abetted by corrupt Californian weapons contractors and dishonest brokers from Zürich, the Strauss regime acquires the capacity to destroy the Soviet Union in a single nuclear strike, and with that Mr Erdman's drama achieves an intriguing if improbable climax.

What the real Herr Strauss might make of all this can only be guessed at. Perhaps he would protest — with some justice, I think — that the prospect of him is unduly vivid, pointing out that if he does one day become Chancellor he is unlikely to allow his followers to proclaim him to be *"Der neue Führer des Deutschen Volkes"*. Nor, at his time of life, is he likely to harbour ambitions to destroy Soviet Russia.

Less engaged readers, though, should find Mr Erdman's predictions diverting: he writes with verve and has an admirably sane view of the men who would control our destiny.

Appearance of genius

By Harold Beaver

JOHN KENNEDY TOOLE:
A Confederacy of Dunces
338pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.
0 7139 1422 X

"For sheer pleasure", Osbert Lancaster observed, "few methods of progression can compare with the perambulation. The motion is agreeable, the range of vision extensive, and one has always before one's eyes the rewarding spectacle of a grown-up maintaining prolonged physical exertion." Above all, there is the pasha-like power of infants, derived from the mere act of jettisoning a teddy-bear or rattle, that can readily quell any tendency of grown-ups to independence.

Ignatius J. Reilly, of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, is just such an infant, inflated to grotesque dimensions. Like Ignatius, his author too had apparently been still living with his mother at the age of thirty. It was Thelma D. Toole who relentlessly hawked her son's manuscript, which had been unanimously rejected in the 1960s, until she elicited an enthusiastic commendation from Walker Percy. John Kennedy Toole's posthumous fiction was finally published last year by the Louisiana State University Press. To a universal chorus of praise. It is a masterpiece.

Until the mother publishes her own memoirs, it will be hopeless to try to disentangle fact from fiction. For what are one-point sounds like hilarious satire of American junk culture, at another sounds like self-loathing. The loathing shifts remorselessly to self-loathing. The title derives from Swift: "When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him." That must have been John Kennedy Toole speaking. (Ed Lindorf's jacket illustration is clearly based on Toole's photograph.) For he committed suicide in 1969, at the age of thirty-two, depressed at his failure to get the novel published.

That suppressed "true genius" was his own. Who else is the mock-hero of this fiction? Who else this grotesque pasha, this southern Obolomov wallowing in his flannel nightshirt in a back bedroom in New Orleans? This lumbering, bloated, belching, hypochondriacal slob who is literally a weight round his mother's neck? Mercilessly Ignatius J. Reilly tyrannizes over his mother. Relentlessly he manipulates everyone by his monumental sloth and size. A true southerner of the old school, he rants against the modern world. A roystering medievalist at heart, he yearns for the luminous age of chivalry and Thomas à Becket. Boethius' *De Consolatione*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Don Quixote* are his guides as he swings up and down — mostly down — the cycles of fortuna.

This inert blob of domesticated tissue (like the hero of Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, 1963) is compulsively drawn to movies, greedily studying the credits for performers, assistant producers, even hair designers that had previously roused his loathing, taunting himself on close-ups, inspecting smiles for cavities and fillings. A purulent mess; he seeks out his mirror image in the world. His gloating lust is all expended on the movies and TV (that hang-up was all too true of the 1950s and early 60s), while he lashes out at homosexuals, homosexuals, Protestants, "newspaper reporters, stripteasers, birds, pornography, juvenile delinquents, Nazi pornographers". He dreams of terrorizing the white proletariat.

The Negro terrorizes simply by being himself. I, however, must browbeat a bit in order to achieve the same end. Perhaps I should have been a Negro. I suspect that I would have been a rather large and terrifying one, continually pressing my ample thigh against the withered thighs of old white ladies in public conveyances, a great deal, and eliciting more than one shriek of panic.

This man-mountain of heaving fat — all lethargy and rancour — is a wholly novel compound, both repellent and, with his

gargantuan farts, and melancholy as melancholy Jacques, and coyly virginal as Oliver Hardy, inflated with genetic gas, when his psychic valve snaps shut, he bumbles and flows into desecrated, knockabout regions of parody, like another Pygmalion.

But Ignatius is not the only memorable character. There is also a supporting cast of zany patrolmen, bag-men, night-club proprietors, hustlers, black vagrants, how-dog vendors and female militants crisscrossing the Street to the Crescent City from Canal Quarter to the wharves along the Mississippi. Bourbon, Royal, Charles, St. Peter, Dumaine: all the lovely names of the Quarter resound. All the scenes resound: of the black apes, the blue queens, "the German and Irish Third Ward". Mark Twain himself might have saluted such an achievement. A spirit of revelry, of Mardi Gras, hovers over all as Ignatius (now a holiday vendor), an Italian patrolman, a Negro doorman and a variety of homosexual wander about the Quarter in festive drag.

The plot itself is explosively inventive. Again and again I hunt out something like a twenty year gap divides this text from the 1980s. *The Sister Carrie*, *A Confederacy of Dunces* has reached us after a long and painful detour. John Kennedy Toole himself died in 1969, a year of revolt and rejuvenation. His novel is still rooted in an earlier decade of song, its explicit exclusion — of verbal savagery from the dark womb of cinema, family bedrooms, bars, bus terminals, rest-rooms, pool-halls and the back row of seat-nara. Twice Ignatius falls out (dragged by his mother to find work) to be inconspicuously transformed: first into a rabble-rousing leader of street-law labour; next, into a sexual campaigner. For, in a grand finale, he attempts to organize an international takeover. "Save the World Through Depression".

In those reactionary countries in which the deviates seem to be having some trouble in gaining control, we will send aid to them as rebels to help them in toppling their government. When we have at last overthrown all existing governments, the world will enjoy not war but global order, conducted with the utmost protocol and the most truly international spirit for these people do transcend any national differences. Their minds are on one goal; they are truly united; they think as one.

None of the pedantic in power, of course, will be practical enough to know about such devices as bombs, these nuclear weapons would be nothing in their vaults somewhere. From time to time the Chief of Staff, the President, and so on, dressed in sequins and feathers, will entertain all the leaders, i.e., the pervers, of all the other countries at balls and parties. Quarrels of any sort could easily be straightened out in the great room of the redecorated United Nations.

But this Satyricon of disguised mal-depauvres and abject ennui necessarily moves to a comic resolution. The mother remarries; the developer returns to his factory; the psychobabbling wife is worried; the stripper, hits the big time; the vagrant lands a job; the bag-lady is retired; Ignatius is rescued by his activist not-legit friend. The novel's beneficent trail runs out to be wholly beneficent. This comic buffoonery on the provincial frontier is the Carnival City. The trickster hero of the Carnival City, an analogy that surrounds him is relative and mysteriously creative.

As Ignatius drags his girl out of the front door, he asks: "Don't you want to pack anything?" "Oh, of course," he recalls. "There are a lot of my clothes and my mother's. We must never let them fall into the hands of my mother. I would make a fortune from them. I would too ironies." Just how ironic John Kennedy Toole himself was never to know.

A review of the American edition of *A Confederacy of Dunces* appeared in the TLS of July 16 1980.

SECOND THOUGHTS

This is the first of an occasional series of articles in which distinguished writers have been invited to reassess or reflect on one of their own works.

Somehow to my surprise, the TLS's invitation to revisit one of my books plunged me into a state of contemplation. I was inundated by pleasurable memories; there is something about a finished manuscript, repeatedly re-read, meticulously edited, that is then set in type by trade-union printers, sent out to reviewers — and even occasionally reviewed — which later settles the dust of recollection to form. For a time I hesitated, not whether to accept, but which book to choose. That beautiful Platonic conceit, my books are my children, would not leave me: my children, would not leave me: my children, would not leave me. Head of a family, I love them all equally, with all their flaws. But then a favourite emerged, because it recalled a dramatic moment, a secular epiphany, that I have very rarely experienced in more than two decades of writing and publishing since.

I must begin at the beginning. *Voltaire's Politics* did not start out as a book at all. In the early 1950s, when I was teaching the history of political thought at Columbia University, I found the secondary literature on the eighteenth century to be singularly unimpressive. In 1953, translating Ernst Cassirer's splendid interpretative essay, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, I turned up several monographs on major political theorists of the age like Kant, or Locke, or Rousseau, but very little that was persuasive, even helpful, on that considerable body of second-rank eighteenth-century writers who had interesting political ideas of their own. Carl Becker's plausible and popular *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*, first published in 1932 and still, after over twenty years, imprinted, struck me (and still strikes me) as clever and perverse, owing its reputation, and its readership, to its brevity, its wit, its gibes and its evasions; the philosopher, Becker argued, were really medieval philosophers in modern dress, rationalists on the model of Thomas Aquinas, absurdly hopeful about the future, and egregiously unhistorical.

In the spring of 1956, I had an opportunity to express my opinion about Becker's little joke on the Enlightenment in the presence of his mortal pupils and admirers. But meanwhile I had been at work. If one had done justice to the political ideas in the age of the Enlightenment, I would do so myself. I envisioned, and laid out, a row of three volumes, each consisting of six substantial essays on writers like Diderot and Holbach, Lessing and Wieland, Hume and Ferguson. Enjoying a year off at Princeton in 1955-56, I decided to initiate my

ambitious portrait gallery with Voltaire, of whom I then knew only what everybody knew: he was an apostle of toleration who had coined that admirable saying, "I disagree with everything you say, but I shall fight to the death for your right to say it"; he was the ally adversary of revealed religion, at the same time, he advocated preaching supernatural punishment to the masses to keep them in order; he was a servile courtier to the princes of his day — Frederick of Prussia, Catherine of Russia — and, not surprisingly, a champion of enlightened despotism. This, by and large, was what the textbooks taught me. There was even a whole book devoted to Voltaire's politics, a hapless published dissertation by Constance Rowe, *Voltaire and the State*, which worshipfully quoted each of Voltaire's libertarian pronouncements as though it had been inscribed on bronze and had, in its resounding generality, nothing whatever to do with the real political world of the eighteenth century. I did not know much, but I knew that I could — and must — do better than that.

By no means all of the literature on Voltaire was shallow or misleading, and I soon found me one startling fact. Burdett I. Kimmé's one-page article, "Voltaire Never Said It", disclosed that Voltaire's most famous maxim, "I disagree with everything you say", had actually been invented by E. Beatrice Hall, better known under her pseudonym S. G. Tallentyre, for use in her bulky biography of Voltaire, published in 1903. It was, she blithely informed Kinney, the kind of thing Voltaire might well have said.

The disclosure was liberating and confusing alike; it did not discredit Voltaire's reputation for tolerance, but it shook my confidence in what I thought — and nearly everyone else thought — about him. And I was further assisted in my search for the real Voltaire by a few thoughtful essays, and a handful of specialized monographs, such as Paul Chappelet's *Voltaire chez les Calvignoles* which showed credible Calvignoles at work during the last decades of his life, meddling with his neighbours, the Genevans. There was nothing for it; I must start my search for the real Voltaire's own immensely voluminous writings. I began with the obvious texts: his political pamphlets and essays, little broadsides like his much quoted *Idées républicaines*; and such celebrated miscellanies as his *Dictionnaire philosophique*. Once launched, I made another discovery, which markedly expanded my assignment, but at the same time sharpened my perceptions: even when Voltaire was not ostensibly or explicitly writing about politics, he was in politics up to his neck. I found remarkable, and to me invaluable, political material scattered across his plays, his poems, his stories and (of all places) his laboured

effort at producing a modern rival of Vergil's *Aeneid*, his interminable epic about Henri IV, the *Henriade*. It said far more about early eighteenth-century France than about late sixteenth-century France.

Having started, I found it impossible to predict where I could stop, what I could safely omit. The very definition of politics, of political thinking, was at issue. His short stories, his lyrics, his histories were all revealing, all indispensable. Two of the most valuable repositories of Voltaire's political ideas were his vast correspondence and his notebooks, both in the process of being authoritatively edited by Theodore Besterman. I ploughed through hundreds of his diary entries, thousands of his letters.

All this took time but the results exceeded my hopes. From his writings, published or unpublished, I recognized — or better, reconstructed — a new Voltaire: a highly political man persistently engaged in concrete issues in the most concrete possible way though not in the most concrete possible language. I learned to attribute this disparity between his involvement in fact, and detachment in prose, to two causes: the sheer familiarity of Voltaire and his readers with the issues he was addressing, and his fear of the authorities. Voltaire could safely confine himself to the most general allusions to public issues. Besides, as we all know, Voltaire lived in an age of censorship. He needed to tread cautiously: he felt obliged not merely to deny authorship of his most provocative — notably his anti-Christian — tracts but also to adopt abstract formulations, to use self-protective devices in a game that everyone was playing. Inconsistent, irritable, sometimes short-tempered officials could make life hard, even for an almost untouchable celebrity like Voltaire, and so he used circumlocutions — but which everyone would penetrate — but which everyone would be his historians.

There was something extremely gratifying about this way of reading Voltaire. It was not principally that I was about to revise the dominant, almost unanimous, view of Voltaire's politics; it was rather — and I did not then clearly articulate this to myself — that I was discovering a human being. Voltaire emerged from the abstractions of the text books, or from the string of anecdotes and apophthegms that clustered about him, to come alive as a widely travelled Frenchman of his time, alert, informed, supremely intelligent, notably responsive to the countries he visited, to the writers and statesmen he engaged in conversation and correspondence.

Though it took me some time to discover this person, once I had him in my possession, the organization of my book imposed itself on me. I would have to begin with the reputations he had enjoyed — if "enjoyed" is the right

word here — and then follow him from place of residence to place of residence: from England to France to Poissia to Russia in Geneva, back in France again. Voltaire was certainly not a political theorist; he never developed a coherent structure of propositions. He was, rather, a journalist and publicist endowed with realistic judgment and quick wit, who depended on certain firm ethical convictions which organized his political perceptions. He was, then, a journalist only about institutions. He was, then, a journalist only about English freedom and constitutional government as the best of all possible forms, but a myslat in France, implacably hostile to the abstractionist pretensions of nobility, of robe and sword alike, and confident that the king's ministers alone had the grasp and the disinterestedness to reform his native country. And while he was a more or less acquiescent — though by no means uncritical — supporter of the "enlightened" rulers governing such backward countries as Prussia and Russia, he showed a sympathetic observer of (and, after a while, participant in) the constitutional struggles dividing the Genevan republic, moving steadily to the left to support the claims of the disfranchised majority of the population. I found his flexibility in face of the complicated and even-minded political in-fighting in Geneva particularly admirable — and particularly instructive: here was a Voltaire that no one — almost no one — had ever seen.

It was in fact Voltaire's interventions in Genevan politics that provided me with my epiphany. I had been studying his pamphlet, *Idées républicaines*, assigned, by nearly all of his editors, to 1762. But in tracing his part in the complicated negotiations — culminating

in near-civil war — that tore the Genevan Republic apart in the early 1760s, I happened upon a "little plan of pacification", drawn up in mid-November 1765, though first published in the *Revue de la France* in 1908. I can still vividly recall the excitement that flooded me, right in the stacks of the Princeton Library, as I read that document, the "propositions à examiner pour apaiser les divisions de Genève". Here was my *maledictio*. The plan contained, almost word for word, phrases, sentences, proposals I knew very well — from Voltaire's *Idées républicaines*. I rushed to Voltaire's letters of late 1765, copious as always, to find that he was indeed meddling in Genevan politics, entertaining local worthies and, as he told one of his acquaintances (while strenuously denying this to all the others) drawing up his little plan of pacification. The fit was perfect.

This discovery did not simply enable me to relate an important political essay of Voltaire's by three years. It confirmed the hypothesis that had increasingly taken hold of me: the most abstract generalizations in Voltaire's writings, his most remote pictures, were elements in current debate. He was a political man in his bones. This permitted me to reinterpret Voltaire the man and thinker from beginning to end — and more: it gave me a handle on the Enlightenment as a whole. I could see it now as far closer to life, far more engaged with reality, than had long been the fashion.

Thus in my conclusion, my presentation, and my conclusions, I departed, not merely from the conventional view of Voltaire, but also from the traditional way of doing intellectual history, in which an idea spawns another idea, in which thinker confronts thinker in

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To Haruspicate Or Scry

I do not see what skill with leaves in the cup, Mother Shipton or computer science, will tell us about the hardest of all things to know: What is to Come.

Sleep will often snore the hell of my head, heavily, with dreams of the old house, say, but all changed now, or flight, or that slow descent of the giant crimson tunnel.

We know well enough what it is. That anowry-chargered mountebank and toothbrush monster, but through not knowing, came a crash in Russia.

In the end those narratives the alse of England but I would opt to be Wellington simply choose cover from view, to avoid the head of the great column, fire two volleys and form square.

A damned close-run thing. But now, I cannot see through the future as well as once in the past, remembering years, and forget or put it down to the lie in the petrol.

John Holloway

pure isolation. Several years later, reflecting on what I had done, I defined this way as the "social history of ideas". I do not know whether I invented the name, though I think so: I certainly did not invent the thing. It is at least implicit in the programme that that most distinguished of intellectual historians, Arthur O. Lovejoy, had developed in the 1930s. What I had done, whatever I owed to others, had been to explore Voltaire's experience in his own time, in his own setting. I discovered the significance of Voltaire's motto, *Au fait!* What I meant by the "social history of ideas" is obvious enough: the fitting of ideas into their lived context, a way of understanding, and presenting, experienced meanings, of analysing the situations from which ideas derive and which they, in turn, affect. This did not mean (as was clear to me even as I wrote the book) that ideas are sheer epiphenomena. The casual oversimplifications of Marx, even as modified and moderated by the aged Engels, neither tempted nor attracted me. I did not believe then – nor do I now – that the traditional way of intellectual history was in any way inferior to the "social history of ideas"; I was catholic enough to see the house of history as very capacious indeed. But the traditional way was not my way. Moreover, it was not the best way for understanding someone who drew so thirstily from the life around him as Voltaire, and expressed nearly all of his convictions indirectly, opaquely. Now, looking back at *Voltaire's Politics* more than twenty years after its publication, I find that I still like the method I used and still hold the conclusion I reached. This was the way, I think, to get at his experience.

Would I do the book differently now? That, I suppose, is the question that underlies these requests for a second look. For the past five years or

so, after dabbling in it as a sympathetic amateur for a number of years, I have been pursuing the possibility of the serious psychoanalytic perception of history – not "psychohistory", but history from a psychoanalytic perspective. This, as I look back, is not a repudiation of the social history of ideas at all, but an extension of it into another dimension. In *Voltaire's Politics* I moved to the external situations which Voltaire's ideas were generated and tested. In my present studies, I am moving from ideas to the internal situations that generate and shape them. As I now see it, a wide enough view of the Freudian dispensation would include the social history of ideas as a special, if important, case. After all, especially in Freud's age psychology (as developed by Heinz Hartmann and others) the relation of the person to external realities are as significant for him as his commerce with his drives. As psychoanalysts recognize, each individual is unique, yet each reflects his time and his station. Except for the most regressed psychotics, human beings test realities and live, more or less uncomfortably, according to the dictates of the reality principle.

But this comprehensive vision of history, which embraces the social and the psychological history of ideas, is food for the future. What strikes me now, as I reread *Voltaire's Politics* and ruminate about its reception, is that, except for adding some psychoanalytic interpretations, I would leave the book pretty much as I wrote it. After all, it changed the general way of seeing Voltaire – a little. The reviewers were kind and supportive, and the authors of college textbooks, those powerful transmitters of new ideas, have for some years adopted the portrait of the political Voltaire that I drew more than twenty years ago. There is, of course, no French translation.

Decolonizing Connecticut

By Peter Marshall

RICHARD BUEL JR.
Dear Liberty
Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War
425pp. Wesleyan University Press.
\$28.10.
0 8195 5042 7

JAMES H. HUTSON.
John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution
199pp. University of Kentucky Press.
\$13.
0 8131 1404 7

In choosing to investigate the causes of the American Revolution, historians have approached a problem which is both complex and controversial. In its nature, or least appears to lead to a definite conclusion: the winning of the nation's independence. If, however, the question is also raised as to how Americans defined the institutional needs and national characteristics of their new condition, perceived and created the necessary structures and purposes of the United States in its first years, matters of a much less tangible and finite quality require an explanation. Hitherto, and not unreasonably, in the light of the difficulties involved, it has seemed preferable to dwell on details and debate their significance. American independence, demanded military and diplomatic success, and these instruments of victory have been subjected to the closest scrutiny. Important though it is, nevertheless, to discover how foreign recognition was secured and how battles were lost and won, the process by which these events were incorporated in the nation's awareness of its unique identity has been given less attention. Of late this imbalance has been somewhat redressed, not least by these two studies.

Richard Buel's *Dear Liberty*, though not as massively ambitious as *Revolutionary People in War*, deals with the war in Connecticut. Had it kept within the bounds of convention it would, beyond doubt, have been much less extensive, since only 151 defenders of the State

were reckoned to have died in battle. It is true that any account of war-time Connecticut needs to dwell less upon apocalyptic attacks than upon perpetual fears of invasion. A British onslaught always seemed likely, either in the South by sea from Long Island Sound, from West or East, if forces should advance from New York or Rhode Island, or from the North, whence an army might renew the old threat of Quebec.

Initially the State, undisturbed by any need for changes in its colonial political institutions, responded wholeheartedly to the challenge of war: until September 1776 military enrolments demonstrated that those able to fight were overwhelmingly willing to do so. But as campaigns grew more distant and protracted, and the enemy gained strength, so the cost of the more evident than the reality of its popularity. This shift of emphasis requires much of Professor Buel's discussion of the later years of the Revolution: to centre not on camps and battlefields but rather on State finances, to a degree that may make some readers yearn for the simplicity of a military narrative. Yet money was linked to morale; the willingness of the British to accept defeat after Yorktown may have been, if Connecticut's case was at all typical, a premature concession. Military demands had led the State into bankruptcy, and its economy had suffered the loss of nothing from the war: the return of peace would only begin the process of changing trade patterns established in the colonial period. To the people of Connecticut, therefore, the fortunes of war in no way offered a simple justification of American independence, to the extent that, for all his concern with non-military matters, Buel can only hint at the impact of Revolutionary events upon them.

The arrival of Rochambeau's army in New England neither ended Connecticut's economy nor transformed relations between the United States and France. James H. Hutson's study of John Adams' contribution to the diplomacy of the Revolution stresses the colonial origins of his subject's outlook. Adams was able to commit himself fully to the struggle against the British without abandoning an earlier and deep distrust of France and French influence in Connecticut. His years in

Taking charge of Canada

By H. S. Ferns

JOY E. ESHERY.
Knight of the Holy Spirit
A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie
245pp. University of Toronto Press.
\$20.
0 8020 5502 8

In her introduction Joy E. Eschery alleges that there is a "tendency to separate Mackenzie King's private life from his public career... This misleading and dysfunctional 'double vision' of King's personal development is challenged in this study, which provides a comprehensive analysis of King's personal development and a consideration of selected examples of his political behaviour to demonstrate that the separation of the private and public King is invalid."

Just who has endeavoured to separate "the private and the public King" is never made clear. Professor Eschery's attempt to solve a non-problem has, however, resulted in an interesting and illuminating book, which adds to our information, serves to correct several misunderstandings and re-inforces the view that Mackenzie King was never an artist in his own career, worked out principles of politics. Her larger thesis that Mackenzie King's policies were a direct expression of his neurotic personality seems, at least to this reader, to have little or no substance.

But first the good things in Professor Eschery's book. In 1976 Colonel C. P.

Stacey published *A Very Double Life, the Private World of Mackenzie King*. By making use of his Diaries, Stacey purported to show that Mackenzie King relied upon prostitutes for the satisfaction of his sexual needs. Possessed of a more sensitive imagination, greater psychological understanding and with a stricter regard for evidence than Stacey, Professor Eschery concludes that Mackenzie King's "alleged patronizing of prostitutes... [is] unproven". Like Gladstone, King had a lively interest in prostitutes, but he sought to redeem them and guide them into the paths of righteousness. That he wanted also to get into bed with them is likely, but he did not and did not.

Professor Eschery's account of Mackenzie King's connection with Mathilde Grosset reveals a striking parallel with the experience of D. H. Lawrence as depicted in the story of Paul and Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. King met Mathilde in a hospital in Chicago where she was a nurse and he a patient. This was in the year 1896, when King was not yet twenty-two. He spent time walking with and talking to Mathilde, and he told her in a letter that he found "in your words and thoughts and actions a truer expression of those graces and virtues which constitute the ideal woman than I have found to the world over, my mother and sisters alone excepted". An ambiguous compliment for a determined lover, but significant.

King's family learned of this attachment with alarm. While might marry! Manoeuvring much like Paul More's mother, Mrs Klog was duly reserved. Was not Miss Grosset too old? His father feared for the financial consequences of the son's "great expedition" being directed elsewhere than to the family. In addition they frankly thought a mere nurse was not good enough for the cherished eldest son.

The young King could not resist this pressure. On March 29, 1898, he wrote a letter to Mathilde in which he asked her to "believe me if I ever get you in these arms you will never break from them in this world or the next". But he did not send it. "I longed to love Miss Grosset", he wrote in his diary a few weeks later, "and somehow it seems as if I cannot." He even prayed "that Miss Grosset may not love me".

The victory of Mackenzie King's mother and his family in the matter of Miss Grosset was the critical avowal in his emotional life. Henceforward he sought out women, but in a sexual sense he was never serious or capable of being serious. As yet, he preferred women to men, friends. What he really liked was an intelligent woman who was "safe" like Mrs Marjorie Hartridge, the wife of a clergyman in Ottawa and a mother of children, or Violet Markham, an English woman of independent means and a Liberal reformer who fortunately lived the other side of the Atlantic and could be written to when not being talked at. In Violet Markham's case Mackenzie King was plagued and jealous when she married a Mr Carruthers. Later in life he had as a friend Mrs Joao Patterson, the wife of an Ottawa bank manager who had the happy faculty of being able to listen to Browning read aloud and at length by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Professor Eschery is less persuasive when she considers what she calls the "cult of money" and Mackenzie King's devotion to the accumulation of capital. He was a mean and selfish man, but surely he was right in recognizing that a career in politics requires that its practitioners, if they want to preserve any degree of independence, must have a prudent regard for their bank accounts and their investments. Mackenzie King had no inherited wealth. His father was an incompetent provider with pretensions to scholarship and respectability beyond his capacities. Much was expected of Willie in a financial way. Having regard for the services he rendered the Rockefeller and the business class in Canada, it is possible to be astonished at his moderation. It must be borne in mind that Mackenzie King lived in an age when it was still regarded as important for the individual and the state to believe in books, and it is an anachronism for Professor Eschery to regard prudence and care in the matter of savings as an aspect of neurosis. Canadians, like others, seem to have forgotten whereof their substance comes. And when one

thinks about it \$750,000, accumulated through much parsimony, was not a great reward for being a Prime Minister longer than anyone in history. Valpole, second in the Prime Ministers' stakes, would have regarded a fortune of such dimensions with contempt.

Professor Eschery repudiates the notion that Mackenzie King was a "great compromiser" and an opportunist. In this she is right, but for the reasons. Nowhere in her study does she pay the slightest attention to Mackenzie King as a thinker. The fact that he studied at the University of Toronto during a period of discontent with the formality of that institution and at Harvard at a time of exciting new developments in the social sciences, that he travelled in Britain and Germany when great ideas of social policy were being discussed, are all passed over as if they never were. Does she seriously believe that Mackenzie King was such a simpleton that he never noticed what he in fact wrote about and thought about?

Mackenzie King was a new kind of politician in Canada: one with an active and general knowledge of the social sciences of his time, and, like Prime Trudeau, he came to politics directly from the seminar and the library without any intermediate "education" in a profession, a trade union, a board-room or a pressure group. This, he had some general ideas about the nature of society and its problems, and very little commitment to narrow interests.

Conceivably his neuroses and his loneliness may have contributed to his capacity for thinking abstractly and for his style of writing – so unlike the conventional academic prose of the social sciences of his day. This does not mean, however, that he was not a thinker, an observer of social reality and a man with the imaginative power to find solutions to the problems which his mind told him were there and in need of attention. He had a strong faith in his own understanding of society and of political forces. The evidence of his career shows that he was not always right in his judgments, but he was a greater reputation in the world. His policies and his actions were always of nearly always, consistent with his theories, and these were intellectually developed and not a reflection of neurotic fantasies. The consistency was there, but not for the reasons Professor Eschery supposes.

There were, however, limits to Mackenzie King's understanding. No more than Chamberlain and Daladier, could he understand Hitler. Chamberlain attributed to Hitler a rationality which, although often in evidence, the British Prime Minister believed would sooner or later appear. Mackenzie King, on the other hand, was completely taken by the Führer's mysticism, his humble origins, his love for his mother and the fact that he was a teetotaler, a vegetarian, unmarried and "absolutely in his ways"; to shoot a woman terrorist was himself. The already emerging evidence that Hitler was a mass murderer, Mackenzie King regarded as a subordinate clause in his regard to the Nazi leader. In this case Mackenzie King's talent for self-deception had him deceived not the deceiver.

I find quite incredible Professor Eschery's argument that one cannot separate Mackenzie King's public and private life. I was a member of the secretariat staff from May, 1940 to April 1943, and a member of the Department of External Affairs until December, 1944. For approximately two years in the early 1940s I studied material on Mackenzie King's career, which caused me to re-evaluate some of my ideas about the man as a politician. In May, 1980, I read the Diaries for King for him. What I found during which I worked for him, what I read shocked me because some of the material suggested that Canada's Prime Minister was a superstitious, glib, and yet this was, manifestly, not Mackenzie King. He was, in my mind, the ablest of the leaders of our side in the Second World War. Let us accept that he was "mother fixated", a spiritualist, an eccentric virgin and a neurotic and ungrateful employer, but let us not let that be a master politician who

NAVAL HISTORY

PAUL HAGGIE.
Bellefleur at Bay

The Defence of the British Empire against Japan 1931-1941
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It has often been remarked that in terms of history the British relish their defeats more than their victories; and that aporism is certainly true of the chain of disasters which struck us in the Far East in late 1941 and early 1942.

Paul Haggie actually begins his story immediately after the end of the 1914-18 war, when a complete reappraisal of defence policy was obviously necessary, and Lord Jellicoe's empire mission had recommended the creation of a major naval base at Singapore. In subsequent history, Haggie writes, "is symbolic of the lethargy which afflicted Imperial defence in the inter-war years." Though I don't think "lethargy" is the right word, since there was in fact great activity in the field of committees and inquiries, and also in fleet exercises – which the author ignores – I can see what he means; for by 1931 very little had in fact been accomplished. Much of the responsibility for this state of affairs must surely rest with the Treasury and the successive Chancellors of the Exchequer, notably Churchill who during his 1924-29 tenure of that office consistently opposed the provision of funds to prepare for war against Japan.

As in the strength of the fleet at this time, after the Washington Conference of 1921-22, the basic principle was a One Power Standard; but it would have been more realistic to have ignored the United States, with which war was never envisaged, and to have planned for a two-power standard capable of dealing with both Japan and a European enemy. This was what the Admiralty actually tried to establish; as Haggie remarks, by 1931 "the fleet standard had withered away" – a fact which "statesmen and admirals largely failed to adjust to". He might have added that from 1929 to 1933 that navy was directed by the weakest of Admirals, and that the Board of Admiralty of the century.

The nadir of the service's fortunes came in 1931, when the Ivergordon mutiny coincided almost exactly with Japanese aggression in Manchuria. Before the navy had recovered from the "traumatic effect" of Invergordon the Shanghai crisis suddenly shattered complacency – and incidentally demonstrated not only Japanese ruthlessness, but their efficiency in combined operations. However, the bonding of the crisis by Admiral Sir Howard Kely, the C-in-C, China, and Sir Miles Lampson, the British Minister to China, here receives high praise.

At the beginning of 1933 Admiral Sir Eric Chatfield took over as First Sea Lord, an office which he was to hold for nearly six critical years. With Sir Bolton Byres-Morsell as his political chief, the new Board set about reorganizing the navy's morale and improving its condition. Though a great debt is owed Chatfield for the programme which he initiated and for the recovery of full control of the Fleet Air Arm, he was firmly wedded to the concept of a "main fleet for Singapore". Haggie considers Chatfield "strong on administration but weak on strategic planning", and makes a good case to support this view.

The setting up of the Defence Requirements Committee (DRC) in November 1933, under the very experienced guidance of Sir Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the CID and the Cabinet, marked the beginning of a new era; but the Admiralty's pressure on the DRC was not without effect. In the DRC, the Admiralty's pressure on the DRC was not without effect. In the DRC, the Admiralty's pressure on the DRC was not without effect.

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Steering towards disaster

By Stephen Roskill

Party continued for another four years to provide "another impediment to effective rearmament".

Meanwhile the senior officers on the China Station, notably Sir Frederic Dreyer as C-in-C 1933-35, supported the idea of a rapprochement with Japan, and also gave warning that if nothing was done the situation was bound to deteriorate. Haggie finds an analogy between Dreyer's warnings about Japan's intentions and Vansittart's warnings about Germany – neither of which were heeded. Then the preliminaries to the London Naval Conference of 1935 destroyed all hope that Japan would continue to accept a lesser strength than that of Britain and the USA, as established at Washington in 1922. Relations with America, which had been deplorable at the time of the abortive Geneva Conference of 1927, did, however, improve markedly at this time, largely thanks to the cordiality of Admiral W. H. Standley, the American Chief of Naval Operations.

The London Conference not only produced little by way of international agreement but led to "one of the most disastrous mistakes of British diplomacy in the inter-war years" – namely the Anglo-German naval agreement. It not only accepted that Germany should have 35 per cent of British surface-ship strength but offered her parity in submarines. This was of immense benefit to Hitler, and moreover estranged the French, at a time when their friendship and support were becoming increasingly important. Haggie's conclusion that, although the agreement was "a major blunder... it was an explicable one" is in my view generous.

With the eruption of the Abyssinian crisis of the end of 1934 the nightmare of a war with all three dictators loomed large in Whitehall; and the precautionary moves to the Mediterranean made clear the utter impossibility of producing a "main fleet for Singapore", as well as disrupting the programme for naval expansion and training. There is no doubt that Haggie is right in concluding that the naval staff was influential in bringing about the rejection of effective sanctions against Italy. He considers that for the last time the "determined lead" might have changed the course of events at this juncture. Though there is an element of hindsight in such strictures their broad truth can hardly be denied.

In May 1935 the DRC was recalled, again under Hankey, and rendered its second report in the following November. Its importance can be summarized by saying that it altered the whole basis of the navy's strength. Two widely separated enemies now had to be faced, and to do so a New Naval Standard was essential. Yet Treasury reluctance to borrow money for defence purposes, and industrial weakness, especially in the armaments firms, which was a legacy of the lean 1920s, resulted in two and a half years of delay before even the minimum programme to meet the new contingencies had been provided.

Then came the German occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, which ruthlessly exposed the weakness of all the British services; while the demands produced by the Spanish Civil War again destroyed the Admiralty's hopes for a steady programme of expansion and training. In June 1936 plans were prepared for a single-handed war against Japan; and that raised the issue whether we should support Holland in the defence of her East Indies possessions, whose wealth the Japanese obviously coveted. Admiral Sir Charles Little was now C-in-C, China, and his view of Japanese intentions proved to be far more accurate than that of the Foreign Office.

The original forty-two day "period before relief" for Singapore had by this time become quite unrealistic, so the COSA arbitrarily increased it first to seventy days and in 1939 to ninety days. More serious, because it was not wholly theoretical, was the "understanding" of Japanese expressed in initiative" repeatedly expressed in naval circles in the 1930s. This error contributed to the Dominions being given a highly optimistic forecast at the

1937 Imperial Conference – namely that eight capital ships would be sent east. But the doubts expressed, especially by the Australians, were not allayed, and indeed continued to dominate all discussions on the subject right up to and after the outbreak of war. Though it is true that the Dominions were claiming defence by the Mother Country without themselves giving in return any firm guarantee of support, I find the British equivocations on this matter discreditable.

In America, Roosevelt made his famous "Quarantine Speech" at this time, and followed it up with what Haggie calls "a typically vague" proposal for a conference. He considers, however, that by not pursuing these very tentative ideas we lost an opportunity; but he ignores the hostility which the President's feelers aroused in his own country. The truth was that Roosevelt could only move as far and as fast as public opinion – and Congress – allowed him; and although he approved the very secret exchange of plans and ideas between naval representatives, there was no possibility of his undertaking a clear policy of support for Britain, let alone move the Pacific Fleet to Singapore, as the Admiralty hoped.

In 1938 Japanese expansion in China accelerated, and the crisis over Czechoslovakia deepened; but Duff Cooper, the First Lord, had to be satisfied with a money "trillion" which fell far below the needs of the New Standard Fleet. Yet Chatfield, now Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, still clung to the "main fleet concept". Haggie finds the greater flexibility of Sir Roger Backhouse, his successor as First Sea Lord, more commendable; and in fact the Chatfield strategy was dropped in March 1939. Though we told the Americans this was so the Dominions were left in the dark about it.

The alternative now favoured by the Admiralty was the despatch of only two big ships, plus supporting vessels, to Ceylon in order to cover the Indian Ocean trade routes. Yet Chamberlain told Robert Menzies, the Australian Premier, that the promises made earlier still held good – which was a good deal less than honest. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, however, stood consistently firm on policy towards Japan, and there was never any likelihood of the repetition of a situation such as was faced on the luckless Creeds at Munich.

The outbreak of war in Europe and Italy's initial neutrality at least clarified the fact that the first priorities were the Home and Mediterranean theatres; and Sir Andrew Cunningham, the C-in-C in the latter, here called "a born fighter", had no misgivings at all about taking on Italy. Churchill as First Lord now firmly refused to send out capital ships unless the Japanese made trouble; but he assured Richard Casey of Australia that "we should never allow Singapore to fall". Then the disasters of the summer of 1940 in Europe transformed the strategic picture at the same time as the mere millstone of government of Prince Kanoye took office in Japan. Churchill reaffirmed in the Dominions his belief that the Japanese would not attack unless the German invasion of Britain succeeded; but if they did so he promised to call in commitments except home defence in order to send large forces east. Despite this statement he described the long deficiency list sent in by the C-in-C, China as "very large dispersals of force" which could not be accepted; but after the Germans attacked Russia in June 1941 he raised no objection to sending great quantities of equipment, including about 2000 fighter aircraft, to the new ally by the Arctic route. It is impossible to say whether these supplies made the difference between defeat and success for the USSR; but

that they contributed to the collapse in the Far East is surely undeniable.

By April 1941, the Admiralty was still planning to build up a fleet from modest beginnings in Ceylon, keeping open the option of sending it on to Singapore. Though Menzies was pressing for a large fleet Churchill would not go further than repeat his earlier promise. In July the Japanese took over French Indo-China, making the threat to Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies palpable. On the decision to send out the battleships Prince of Wales and Repulse Haggie concludes, in my view rightly, that Churchill "had won a quarter of a century earlier". But what Haggie calls "our decline as a maritime and commercial power" had surely become clear before that catastrophe.

In 1941 Paul Haggie has produced an admirably clear and generally fair account of an extremely complicated story. It is true that a more complete Glossary of Abbreviations and a better Index would have been helpful, one that occasional repetitions should have been eliminated; but I only detected one factual error in these pages, and that quite minor. I see that nearly ten years have elapsed since I began this project with me, and I think that his translation from the groves of academia in Manchester University in the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office, where he is now a First Secretary, has enabled him to gain a deeper understanding of diplomatic processes on to his previously acquired experience of historical research and writing. It will be interesting to see how closely his presentation of events and his conclusions correspond with those of Professor Arthur Marler, whose recently lamented death has frustrated completion of his study of Anglo-Japanese naval rivalry, but whose first volume on the same subject as Haggie's is expected next autumn.

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